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*Casta Diva: Juno's "Unexpected Pain" in Statius' Thebaid**

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I'm not bad. I'm just drawn that way.
Jessica Krupnick Rabbit

According to Servius, Virgil's Juno does not speak, unless out of sheer necessity¹. Statius' Juno speaks out, in the first book of the *Thebaid* (*Theb.* 1.250-82), quite involuntarily, out of a sudden and "unexpected pain" (1.249 *inopinum... dolorem*), in response to Jupiter's verdict to implicate her beloved Argos in Thebes' fratricidal war through the wedding of Polynices and Argia (*Theb.* 1.214-47). This first speech of Juno in the *Thebaid* sets her character on a truly innovative path in comparison to her epic predecessors. Here, the once vengeful goddess of Virgil's *Aeneid*

* — This paper originated in the workshop *Opening up the Thebaid: A Reading of Book 1*, held in 2016 at the SNS in Cortona. I would like to thank the organisers for their invitation, the participants for their feedback, and random fate for assigning to me such an intriguing section to comment. I am also especially grateful to Stefano Briguglio, Francesco Cannizzaro, Philip Hardie, John Henderson, Carole Newlands, Victoria Rimell, Alessandro Schiesaro and *EuGeStA's* anonymous referees for their help and comments.

1 — Serv. *ad Aen.* 10.63-4: "Iuno ubique silens inducitur; ei oratio nisi ex nimia necessitate non datur" ("Juno is portrayed everywhere silent; her speech is only given out of sheer necessity").

and Ovid's *Metamorphoses* appears as almost intent on correcting her previous portrayals, determined to demonstrate that this epic at last will be far from "a work wrought by savage Juno" (*Theb.* 1.12 *saeuae Iunonis opus*), despite what every other character seems to believe. This patent allusion to Virgil's Juno (*Aen.* 1.4 *saeuae... Iunonis*) has already been recognised by Denis Feeney as "misleading", since Juno in this poem will be "astonishingly mild in speech and action, considering her epic heritage"². Perhaps "unexpectedly" for an epic successor of Virgil and Ovid, Juno in the *Thebaid* is not a goddess of revenge, but of piety and reconciliation³. In metapoetic terms, she is, just as in the *Aeneid*, a veritable engine to the epic, but she explicates her poetic agency not by causing hindrance and delay to the action, but by anticipating the poem's narrative in her speeches and by assisting its closure through her interventions. Yet, these speeches and interventions are rare in the *Thebaid*, where Juno spends most of the time away from the epic. The present article purports to show the inherent significance of Juno's speechlessness and inaction in the *Thebaid*, while expanding on Helen Lovatt's suggestion that we read this goddess "against the grain as an underdog struggling to assert herself in a masculine universe"⁴.

As has so far gone unnoticed in this poem's critical history, Juno's speech in *Thebaid* 1 is both rhetorically ineffective and poetologically revealing. Its ineffectiveness is underscored by Jupiter's brusque rebuttal (*Theb.* 1.285-302) and appears especially evident once we compare it to its symmetrical companion piece at the start of the second half of the poem: Bacchus' appeal to Jupiter in support of Thebes (*Theb.* 7.155-92). Juno's failure to convince at the very start of the poem seems to cause a sort of narrative ostracization of the goddess, emphasising how the bulk of the *Thebaid*, even at those junctures where marriage is concerned, is essentially a male-to-male business. For Juno will be cut off from the narrative of the *Thebaid* up until Book 9, when she addresses her husband with a more effective, and still poetologically revealing speech, in order to save "her" Mycenaean Hippomedon (*Theb.* 9.511-19). Her absence from the narrative up to this point is surprising: she is not invited, so to

2 — Feeney 1991: 354 (see 343 n. 104 on *saeuae Iunonis*).

3 — Ganiban 2007: 52-3 sees it in terms of a role reversal between Jupiter and Juno in the poem (but see also pp. 30-3 on how Oedipus takes up the role of Virgil's Juno in *Thebaid* 1, not without the mediation of the "Juno Inferna" of Seneca's *Hercules Furens*, with Criado 2000: 26-9). In the *Aeneid*, Juno is often interpreted as the goddess of openings and delay to the action, while Jupiter is an agent of closure and reconciliation (Hershkowitz 1998: 94-111). On how the gods of the *Thebaid* are always bound to subvert expectations see Feeney 1991: 337-64, Criado 2000; Delarue 2000: 346-52 on Juno; Schiesaro 2019 on Bacchus. On the ambiguous portrayal of Jupiter in the *Thebaid* see also Schubert 1984: 253-60, Dominik 1994: 25-9, Hill 1996a and 2008, Delarue 2000: 291-306, Criado 2000a, Bessone 2011: 30-74.

4 — Lovatt 2013: 55.

speak, to the wedding between Polynices and Argia in Book 2 that she should herself initiate as patron goddess of marriage, although we know that she kept woman-to-woman communication with Argia, trying to warn her in her dreams (*Theb.* 2.350-1; cf. 3.691-2). She is also not invited, it would seem, to the second council of the gods in Book 3, when we only hear of her through Jupiter, who depicts her as embracing with agony her hills and temple in Argos, striving to resist in the whirlwind of the events (*Theb.* 3.251-2). If anything, this withdrawal from the action seems to cast uncertainty over Juno's traditional cruelty even among her most famous detractors: if the narrator in Book 2 could remind us of her deceit of Semele (*Theb.* 2.293 *fallax intrauit limina Iuno*, "false Juno crossed the threshold"), and Aletes and Bacchus in Books 3 and 4 did not hesitate to call her "unjust", "untameable" and "cruel" (*Theb.* 3.184 *iniquae*; 4.672 *indomitae*; 4.676 *improba*), Argia rehabilitates the goddess by emphasising that she was never deceitful to *her* (*Theb.* 2.350-1 *a memini! numquam mihi falsa per umbras / Iuno uenit*, "ah, I remember! Juno never played me false when she came to me through the shadows")⁵, and doubts arise in Books 7 and 8 even in the mouths of her fiercest enemies, Bacchus himself (*Theb.* 7.156 *saeua adeo coniunx?*, "is your wife really so cruel?") and Hercules (*Theb.* 8.503-4 *num regia Iuno / hoc molita nefas?*, "has queen Juno really contrived this evil?")⁶. With her prayer to Hippomedon finally recognized as "just" by her husband (*Theb.* 9.519-20 *aequas... preces*), Juno is rehabilitated to take part in the final movements of the poem: she is allowed to give assent to the Argive women's prayers in Book 10 (*Theb.* 10.49-83) and to finally help the Pelasgi achieve what Thiodamas defines as an "unexpected joy" (*Theb.* 10.330-1 *inopina... gaudia*), perhaps in answer and retaliation for her "unexpected pain" in Book 1. This is the slaughter of the sleeping Theban army that Juno herself has initiated by sending her commands to Sleep through Iris (*Theb.* 10.126-31) and by enlightening the path for Thiodamas through the night (*Theb.* 10.282-7). Yet, nowhere throughout this action does Juno utter a word. The divine council in Book 10 portrays her again as a silent agent, as she keeps an eye on Bacchus (*Theb.* 10.886-7 *inseruante nouerca*), tormented by furious silence (*Theb.* 10.896 *tacitam furibunda silentia torquent*). She no longer dares to obstruct the fates and she seems

5 — Where the tag *memini* could be interpreted as an internal Alexandrian footnote, hinting by contrast simultaneously at the episode of Semele, and at its reminiscence earlier at *Theb.* 2.293 (on *memini* and literary allusion, see originally Conte 1986: 57-69 and Hinds 1998: 1-5). However, it is unclear whether Argia misunderstands Juno's warnings, since she uses the goddess' message on the inauspicious nature of her wedding in order to convince Adrastus to move the war forward (*Theb.* 3.691-2 *...mouitque infausta sinistram / Iuno facem*, "...and inauspicious Juno tossed the ill-omened torch").

6 — With *num* denoting incredulity, and anticipating the possibility of a negative answer.

even to take part in the killing of Capaneus, when *Iuno Caelestis* becomes *caelestis regia*, which thunders its accord to Jupiter's thunderbolt (*Theb.* 10.912-4 *nec iam audet Fatis turbata obsistere coniunx. / ipsa dato nondum caelestis regia signo / sponte tonat*, "no longer does his wife, in her agitation, dare to obstruct the fates. The heavenly palace itself [or: 'her heavenly palace itself'] thunders on its own accord, before he even gives the sign"). Finally, as the only traditional goddess left on earth, and in a striking reversal of her Virgilian predecessor, she ends up filling the void left by the absence of Jupiter in the last book of the epic⁷. Herself a wife and a sister, and thus the appropriate divine counterpart to the female heroines who bring this poem to a close (Argia and Antigone), Juno oversees the reconciliation of the ending, finally breaking her silence with a "gentle voice" (12.298 *placida... uoce*), by uttering words of forgiveness and forgetfulness to Cynthia Luna (*Theb.* 12.299-308).

In this paper, I survey some key moments of Juno's speech and speechlessness in Statius' *Thebaid*, from her first outburst in Book 1 up to her merciful intervention in Book 12, showing how they draw a portrait of the goddess which seemingly contradicts, or perhaps simply corrects, those previously encountered in Virgil's *Aeneid* and Ovid's *Metamorphoses*. What emerges from Statius' *Thebaid* is the image of a woman wounded, sidestepped and silenced by the very institution of marriage that she is supposed to embody, but over which the start of the *Thebaid* makes patently clear that she doesn't even have power, at least when confronted with her brother and husband. In the face of such powerlessness, Statius' Juno keeps silent, unless moved, twice, by unrequested pity⁸. Finally, it is fellow women who manage to put her intervention in motion, and they do so by means of a calculated visual clue. In the ecphrasis of the *peplum* that the Argive women offer to the goddess, an embroidered portrait of Juno just before her union to her brother Jupiter is introduced by an unusual description of the goddess as "chaste" (*Theb.* 10.58 *castae... diuae*). *Casta diua* in these lines captures our attention not solely for what may well be an intentional reuse by librettist Felice Romani in a famous aria of Vincenzo Bellini's *Norma*⁹. In all its "unexpectedness", the *iunctura*

7 — See Feeney 1991: 357. On this "gendering of divine action" in the last book of the poem, which "means that there is no active, male heavenly counterpart to Theseus", see Chaudhuri 2014: 292 n. 100. Bessone 2011: 30-74 reads Jupiter's absence in the close of the epic as a way to emphasise human providence in the figure of Theseus.

8 — Neither Argos nor Hippomedon requested Juno's help; note that Hippomedon had just summoned Mars instead (*Theb.* 9.506, with Delarue 2000: 348 n. 59).

9 — The *iunctura casta diua* only appears at *Theb.* 10.58 (although cf. *dea casta* in Sulpicia, Tib. 3.12.14 with n. 85), in a prayer to Juno "parthenia", who is then going to act in the book like the moon goddess Juno Lucina (10.282-4), even though Juno and the moon goddess become distinct in *Thebaid* 12. *Norma* directs her prayer at the moon goddess, identifiable not only with Juno Lucina but also with Hecate or Diana, and also described in Act I as having a "virgineal face" (in "Ite sul colle,

signals a snapshot of a lost, remote, alternative Juno – one whose identity is given airtime only in the simultaneous absence of her brother and husband. As I argue in more detail in the course of this paper, the ecphrasis of Juno on the *peplum* (*Theb.* 10.61–4), to be read in tandem with a simile comparing Deidamia to Juno in the *Achilleid* (*Ach.* 1.588–91), brings out the true unexpected and unspoken potential of her gendered pain in and outside this epic, casting her character as a woman wounded from the very start of her existence, and suggesting that it is precisely out of this feminine wound that the poem can achieve a productive reconciliation in its closure.

Speaking once as wife

Juno's first speech in the *Thebaid* is a passionate outburst that fails to take into consideration the gendered power dynamics of the poem, and thus pays the price in the form of the goddess' speechlessness for the following seven books of the epic. It is also, however, a locus dense with metapoetic significance, which speaks volumes to readers more attentive than her husband. In what follows, I trace first the rhetorical ineffectiveness and then the poetological effectiveness of the speech, arguing that they both contribute to shape Statius' innovative portrayal of the goddess, as she is wrongly sidelined in the epic but in fact sees the events unfold like a divine counterpart to Cassandra. The ineffectiveness of this speech is far from obvious, and I will be going against the judgment of critics and commentators, who have variously described it as "a clever piece of rhetoric"¹⁰, an "(impassioned; convincing?) reproach"¹¹, a "skillfully improvised rebuttal"¹², and "a perfect *suasoria*"¹³. But it is clear to me that Juno completely misses her target if that is to dissuade Jupiter from enlisting Argos in the war. This is all the more evident by comparison with Bacchus' plea to Jupiter in support of Thebes in Book 7 (*Theb.* 7.155–92), which has already been recognised by Johannes Smolenaars as "the counterpart of Juno's plea"¹⁴. In this section, I shall introduce Juno's first intervention in the poem and tease out how a close comparison with Bacchus' speech sheds light not only on the rhetorical weaknesses of her appeal, but more precisely on her painfully marginalised role throughout

oh Druidi"). Note that Statius' *Silvae* have been recognised as a possible source for Felice Romani (or better Alexandre Soumet, whose *Norma* Romani adapted) in so far as *Norma* is modelled upon the character of Veleda (*Silv.* 1.4.90), see Kimbell 1991: 514 and 2012: 17–19.

10 — Vessey 1973: 83.

11 — Henderson 1991: 41 n. 67.

12 — Dominik 1994: 13.

13 — Briguglio 2017: 296.

14 — Smolenaars 1994: 74. On how Statius' Bacchus is in turn "unexpected", indeed presented as "tame, weak, almost gullible", see Schiesaro 2019.

the epic, a marginalisation that she will take her time to make productive up until her interventions at the end of the poem.

Juno's first speech is uttered at the council of the gods in Book 1, just after Jupiter has pronounced his intention to punish with war both the house of Thebes and the house of Argos¹⁵:

sic pater omnipotens. ast illi saucia dictis
 flammato uersans inopinum corde dolorem
 talia Iuno refert: "mene, o iustissime diuum, 250
 me bello certare iubet? scis, semper ut arces
 Cyclopum magnique Phoroneos incluta fama
 sceptris uiris opibusque iuuem, licet improbus illic
 custodem Phariae somno letoque iuuencae
 exstinguas, saeptis et turribus aureus intres. 255
 mentitis ignosco toris: illam odimus urbem
 quam uultu confessus adis, ubi conscia magni
 signa tori tonitrus agis et mea fulmina torques.
 facta luant Thebae: cur hostes eligis Argos?
 quin age, si tanta¹⁶ est thalami discordia sancti 260
 et Samon et ueteres armis exscinde Mycenae
 uerte solo Sparten. cur usquam sanguine festo
 coniugis ara tuae, cumulo cur turis Eoi
 laeta calet? melius uotis Mareotica fumat
 Coptos et aerisoni lugentia flumina Nili. 265
 quod si prisca luunt auctorum crimina gentes
 subuenitque tuis sera haec sententia curis,
 percensere aevi senium, <a> quo tempore tandem
 terrarum furias abolere et saecula retro
 emendare sat est? iamdudum ab sedibus illis 270
 incipe, fluctuaga qua praeterlabitur unda
 Sicanios longe relegens Alpheos amores:
 Arcades hic tua (nec pudor est) delubra nefastis
 imposuere locis, illic Mauortius axis
 Oenomai Geticoque pecus stabulare sub Haemo 275
 dignius, abruptis etiamnum inhumata procorum
 reliquiis trunca ora rigent; tamen hic tibi templi
 gratus honos; placet Ida nocens mentitaque manes
 Creta tuos. me Tantaleis consistere terris
 quae tandem inuidia est? belli deflecte tumultus 280
 et generis miserescere tui. sunt impia late
 regna tibi, melius generos passura nocentes".

15 — Statius' text is taken from Shackleton Bailey 2003 unless otherwise indicated. Translations are mine, but often adapted from Shackleton Bailey.

16 — I follow the manuscript tradition (Pw), against Shackleton Bailey, who prints *tanti* with Gronovius. See n. 67.

(*Theb.* 1.248-82)

So spoke the almighty father. But wounded by his words, and with an unexpected pain stirring in her enflamed heart, Juno replied to him: "Me, o most just of the gods, is it me that you order to fight in this war? You know how I have always helped, with men and resources, the towers of the Cyclopes and the sceptre of great Phoroneus, glorious with fame – even though you in that land are allowed to shamelessly annihilate the guard of the Pharian heifer, with sleep and death, and to enter guarded turrets in the shape of gold. But I forgive your affairs in disguise: what I hate is that city where you enter without hiding your face; where you use the signal which is privy to *our* mighty union, the thunder; and where you hurl *my* thunderbolts. Let Thebes expiate her deeds; but why do you choose Argos to be her foe? Rather, if the discord of our sacred bedchamber is so great, then tear away Samos with war, and ancient Mycenae, level Sparta to the ground. Why is your wife's altar happy and warm anywhere with solemn blood and a pile of eastern incense? Mareotic Coptos and the mourning streams of the Nile, resounding with bronze, should better smoke with vows instead. And if the people have to pay for the ancient crimes of their ancestors – and this resolve, to review the whole old age of eternity, has taken a long time to join your worries – then how far back would it be enough to cancel the mad doings of the earth and chastise the centuries backwards? Come on then, start straightaway from that city past which the wave-wandering waters of Alpheus glide, retracing in all its distance his Sicanian love. Here the Arcadians set your shrine (with no shame for you), in these abominable grounds: there was the chariot of Oenomaus, gift of Mars, and a horse herd worthier to be stabled under Getic Haemus, and even now there are the stiff heads of the suitors, mangled and still unburied, torn from their remains. And yet in this place you are pleased to have the honour of a temple; guilty Ida and Crete, which lies about your death, please you too. So why do you grudge *me* to settle in the land of Tantalus? Turn the turmoil of war in another direction and take pity on your own offspring. You have a wide choice of impious realms that would better suffer guilty sons-in-law".

Previously, we heard the verdict of the "almighty father" (1.248 *pater omnipotens*), whose designation marks out his wife's failure from the very start¹⁷. Father though he is to both houses, he is determined to punish both Thebes and Argos (*Theb.* 1.224-5 *nunc geminas punire domos, quis sanguinis auctor / ipse ego, descendo*, "now I descend to punish two houses, my own blood")¹⁸, and the punishment shall be a wedding: the union of

17 — This is the first of a number of Virgilian echoes in these lines (*Aen.* 1.60 *sed pater omnipotens...*).

18 — Thus obsessively underlining the interline nature of civil war from the very start of the poem (see Bessone 2011: 71).

Polynices and Argia. Although conjugal bonds fall within the influence of no other deity than his sister-wife, Jupiter describes this as a wholly male affair:

belli mihi semina sunt
 Adrastus socer et superis adiuncta sinistris
 conubia.
 (*Theb.* 1.243-5)

My seed of war will be Adrastus as a father-in-law, and a wedding union unblessed by the gods.

This is an “insemination of war” (243 *belli... semina*), whose aim is to create a father(and son)-in-law (244 *Adrastus socer*) through the “yoking” (244 *adiuncta*) of an unnamed daughter against the will of the gods (244 *superis... sinistris*) – that is, against the will of unnamed Juno. What Jupiter is doing in this first action of the poem, alongside answering the prayers of another revengeful father with catastrophic consequences for the offspring of both¹⁹, is to usurp the role of his wife, perhaps by directly imitating her own use of marriage as a cause for war in the Virgilian precedent (*Aen.* 7.317 *hac gener atque socer coeant mercede suorum*, “let the father- and son-in-law unite at this cost to their own people”) and her use of Allecto as both mother and father of war when Juno enjoined her to shake her “prolific chest” and “sow the crimes of war” (*Aen.* 7.338-9 *fecundum concute pectus... sere crimina belli*)²⁰. In the same way, he imitates her wording on how the memory of the Trojans’ offences cause her to act at the beginning of the *Aeneid* when he identifies the affront of Tantalus as the reason for his punishment of Argos (*Theb.* 1.245-7 *hanc etiam poenis incessere gentem / decretum; neque enim arcano de pectore fallax / Tantalus et saevae periit iniuria mensae*, “this people too I have decided to assail and punish, for the affront of the cruel banquet has not vanished from the depth of my heart”; cf. *Aen.* 1.25-7 *necdum etiam causae irarum saevique dolores / exciderant animo: manet alta mente repostum iudicium*

19 — On the similarities between Oedipus and Jupiter (“a pair of fathers desiring the extinction of their own bloodlines”) see Gervais 2015: 221.

20 — The expression *semina belli* returns in the *Thebaid* as *semina pugnae* at 3.235-6 and 7.563. Together with 4.212 *scelerum... semina* and 8.253 *sceleris... semina*, these instances form a leitmotiv which, according to Walter 2014: 122, encapsulates the *Thebaid*’s synecdochic relationship to Lucan’s *Bellum Ciuile* (cf. *Luc.* 1.158-9 *belli / semina*; 3.150 *semina belli*), emphasising how Thebes becomes the “core” and “seed” for the whole historical and literary concept of Civil War. Note also that the designation of son-in-law here may evoke the terms of kinship characteristic of the civil war between Caesar and Pompey (see *Luc.* 1.289-90; *Verg. Aen.* 6.830-1 with Rebeggiani 2018: 183). On the importance of *Bellum Ciuile* 1 as a literary model for *Thebaid* 1 see Briguglio 2017: 6-10 and *passim* in the commentary. On the importance of the word *semen* in the poem, in its reminder of the myth of the Theban Spartoi, see also Schiesaro 2019: 194 n. 5.

Paridis... "for the causes of her wrath and her cruel suffering had not yet left her spirit: the judgment of Paris stays fixed in the depth of her mind...")²¹. Thus, he manages to both anticipate and corner Juno: what he needs from her to make sure that these nuptials are unblessed is precisely her disagreement with his verdict.

A victim of her husband more than of the fates²², Juno enters the world of the *Thebaid* burdened by the weight of her previous literary models. While the whole context creates the expectation in her readers of being about to meet her Ovidian predecessor²³, her first reactions portray her as bordering between her former Virgilian character and the character of Dido, herself a pawn of the gods: "wounded" (248 *saucia*, cf. Dido at *Aen.* 4.1 *gravi... saucia cura*), Juno "stirs" her pain within her "inflamed heart" (249 *flammato uersans... corde*; cf. Juno at *Aen.* 1.50 *talìa flammato secum dea corde uolutans*, contaminated with *Aen.* 1.9 *dolens regina deum*)²⁴. She even bursts out just like Virgil's Juno, echoing the very start of her monologue at the beginning of the *Aeneid*, though she tellingly elides any possible reference to her Homeric μήνις (250 *mene, o iustissime...*; cf. *Aen.* 1.37 *mene incepto desistere uictam...*)²⁵. Indeed, Statius' Juno is defined by her pain more than her anger, a pain that is sudden and "unexpected" (249 *inopinum... dolorem*) in comparison to the prolonged, brooding "wound" that characterises Virgil's Juno since the beginning of the *Aeneid* (*Aen.* 1.36 *aeternum seruans sub pectore uolnus*, "nursing an eternal wound in her bosom"), and that she felt forced to lay open in words at the divine council of *Aeneid* 10 (Juno to Venus: *Aen.* 10.63-4 *quid me alta silentia cogis / rumpere et obductum uerbis uulgarè dolorem?*, "Why do you force me to break my deep silence, and to lay open in words the pain that I have been hiding?")²⁶.

21 — On the parallel see Ganiban 2007: 53 and Briguglio 2017: 294. Criado 2000: 34 n. 44 and 39, together with Schubert 1984: 87, finds Jupiter's excuse of Tantalus unmotivated, firstly because the relationship between Tantalus and Adrastus is not straightforward (see Briguglio 2017: 294), and secondly because Tantalus has already been punished for his deeds.

22 — On the problematic identification between Jupiter and Fate in the *Thebaid* see, in response to Vessey's Stoic notion of fate (Vessey 1973: 82-91), Feeney 1991: 354-7, Dominik 1994: 25-9, Hill 1996a and 2008, Criado 2000: 41, 204-15.

23 — The council of the gods in Book 1 is only one of the many reminiscences of Ovid's *Metamorphoses* (1.163-245) at the beginning of the *Thebaid*: see Briguglio 2017: 5, 256-7, 275. On the model of *Metamorphoses* 3 and 4 in *Thebaid* 1-2 see Keith 2002 and Spinelli 2019 (with further bibliography at p. 2 n. 2).

24 — Criado 2000: 40 also notes a structural similarity between Juno's speech and Venus' speech to Jupiter in *Aeneid* 1, although she does not think that this necessarily points to a similarity between the two characters, both dependant upon the archetype of Athena as protectress of Odysseus.

25 — I refer to William Levitan's suggestion (Levitan 1993) that the elision of *Aen.* 1.37 makes Juno's introductory monologue start with a bilingual allusion to Achilles' wrath in the first line of the *Iliad* (*men(e) incepto*; μήνιν ἄειδε). On the possible reception of this pun in Lucan and Silius see Trinacty 2012.

26 — On the metaphor of *obductum* being that of the formation of a scar over a wound see

The “suddenness” of Juno’s speech already points to its metapoetic aspect, underlying the flowing characteristic of her improvisational style²⁷. At the same time, it sets a challenge with her literary predecessors, for which reader of Latin epic, mindful of her vengeful character in Virgil’s *Aeneid* and Ovid’s *Metamorphoses*, would find Juno’s pain “unexpected”? Certainly not Jupiter, who in his reply admits that he knew she wouldn’t take his decision lightly (1.285-7 *equidem haud rebar te mente secunda / laturam, quodcumque tuos, licet aequus, in Argos / consulerem*, “Indeed I did not think that you would judge favourably whatever decision I would take against your Argos, however just”)²⁸. In fact, this was quite a calculation on his part. *Inopinus* would indicate surprise in Juno herself, according to Lactantius Placidus, since she expected to rejoice at the destiny of Thebes, while her cities would be safe²⁹. But the adjective can also be interpreted as the first metapoetic signal of the surprising, and indeed “unexpected” portrayal of the goddess in the whole of the *Thebaid*. Just like her character, the *iunctura* is Virgilian, but not quite; indeed, her very name *Iūnō* at line 250 already signals distance from her predecessor in its un-Virgilian trochaic scanning, anticipating Statius’ twist on the Virgilian (and Ovidian) tradition that will accompany her figure throughout the poem, and even into the truly innovative lines of the *Achilleid*. Similarly, Juno’s insistence on words starting with *iu-* (250 *iustissime*; 251 *iubes*; 253 *iuuem*) seems to evoke but at the same time whitewash her Virgilian role of *Iuno Iugalis*, the patron goddess of marriage unions (*Aen.* 4.59 *cui uincla iugalia curae*, with Servius’ note on the etymology). Instead, she brings an equally famous para-etymology of *Iuno* from *iuuare* (“to aid”), which she shares with her husband *Iuppiter*, but which she attempts at this point of the poem to dissociate from an experience of femininity that would also anticipate her role as the moon goddess (*Iuno Lucina*), something that she will pick up again eleven books later³⁰. Juno here helps not women in

Harrison 1991: *ad loc.*

27 — I am grateful to an anonymous reader for pointing me to the parallel of Statius’ composition of the *Silvae* as hasty, written “in the heat of the moment” (*Silu. Praef.* 1 *subito calore*). Newlands 2002: 33 underlines the contrast between the *Silvae*’s (feigned) improvisational style and the lengthy composition of the *Thebaid* (*Theb.* 12.811-2). One may wonder whether the “suddenness” of Juno’s outburst does not already appear as out of place in this epic, and thus already destined to fail.

28 — Note that 1.286 *licet aequus* directly replies to and corrects Juno’s *licet improbus* at 1.253.

29 — Lactantius *ad loc.*, “quod Thebarum gaudebat exitio, de suis urbibus iam secura”.

30 — See Varro *Ling.* 5.67 *Iuno... quod una iuuat cum Ioue*, “Juno... because she *iuuat* ‘helps’ *una* ‘along’ with Jupiter” and 5.69 (on *Iuno Lucina*) *quod ab luce eius qua quis conceptus est usque ad eam, qua partus quis in lucem, luna iuuat... ficta ab iuuando et luce Iuno Lucina*, “because from that light of hers in which a conception takes place until that one in which there is a birth into the light, the Moon continues to help... the name Juno Lucina was made from *iuuare* ‘to help’ and *lux* ‘light’” (with Spencer 2019: 202-4). See also Seru. *ad Aen.* 1.4 “cum a iuuando dicta sit Iuno...”; Cic. *Nat. Deor.*... 2.66 *Iunonem a iuuando credo nominatam*; and Plutarch *Moralia Quest. Rom.* 77 on Juno Lucina.

labour, but the towers of Cyclopes and the sceptres of kings, and she does it "with men and resources" (253 *uiris opibusque*). Herself robbed of her power, she in turn attempts to usurp the role of *Iuppiter*, who according to Ennius brought aid to the whole earth (Ennius, *Var.* 54-8 in Varro *Ling.* 5.65 [*Iuppiter*] †*qua*† *mortalis atque urbes beluasque omnis iuuat*, "[Iuppiter] ... brings aid to mortals and cities, and all the animals")³¹. In this role reversal that will accompany their characters throughout the epic, Juno is the one who "helps"; Jupiter is the (only sarcastically) "just" tyrant whose main role is instead to "order" (250 *iustissime*... 251 *iubes*).

But *inopinus* also gives us a clue for interpreting Juno's intervention and its function in the poem. Despite the positive judgment of previous critics³², it seems to me that the speech comes across as sudden, impulsive, and rhetorically flawed, if its aim is to convince Jupiter not to involve Argos in the war. As we have seen, Jupiter sets her a trap, and Juno falls right into it. While her plea is glossed by the narrator as an unconvincing mixture of "supplication" and "insults" (1.283 *finierat precibus miscens conuicia Iuno*), it is clear from Jupiter's reply that Juno's fault is to have spoken in the first place, since "both Bacchus and Venus could have dared to speak at length on behalf of Thebes, but they were hindered by the reverence for their father's authority" (1.288-9 *multa super Thebis Bacchum ausuramque Dionen / dicere, sed nostri reuerentia ponderis obstat*). Juno's reaction here comes across as hasty and untimely, especially if we compare its rhetoric with the speech in support of Thebes that Bacchus delays delivering until the beginning of the second half of the poem, and which he crafts by imitating various epic speeches by his step-mother. While Bacchus' appeal is also ineffective in turning the course of the events, it is not so in eliciting Jupiter's sympathy and understanding. The speech is worth quoting in full:

ergo ut erat lacrimis lapsoque inhonoris amictu
ante Iouem (et tunc forte polum secretus habebat)
constitit, haud umquam facie conspectus in illa
(nec causae latuere patrem), supplexque profatur:
"excindisne tuas, diuum sator optime, Thebas? 155
saeua adeo coniunx? nec te telluris amatae
deceptique laris miseret cinerumque meorum?
esto, olim inuitum iaculatus nubibus ignem,
credimus: en iterum atra refers incendia terris,
nec Styge iurata, nec paelicis arte rogatus. 160
quis modus? an nobis pater iratusque bonusque
fulmen habes? sed non Danaeia limina talis

31 — On Ennius' fragment see Manuwald 2016: 333-4.

32 — See above p. 167.

Parrhasiumque nemus Ledaesque ibis Amyclas.
 scilicet e cunctis ego neglectissima natis
 progenies? ego nempe tamen qui dulce ferenti 165
 pondus eram, cui tu dignatus limina uitae
 praereptumque uterum et maternos reddere menses.
 adde quod imbellis rarisque exercita castris
 turba meas acies, mea tantum proelia norunt,
 nectere fronde comas et ad inspirata rotari 170
 buxa: timent thyrsos nuptarum et proelia matrum.
 unde tubas Martemque pati, qui feruidus ecce
 quanta parat? quid si ille tuos Curetas in arma
 ducat et innocuis iubeat decernere peltis?
 quin etiam inuisos (sic hostis defuit?) Argos 175
 eligis! o ipsis, genitor, grauiora periclis
 iussa: nouercales luimus ditare Mycenae!
 cedo equidem. quo sacra tamen ritusque peremptae
 gentis, et in tumulos si quid male feta reliquit
 mater, abire iubes? Thracen siluasque Lycurgi? 180
 anne triumphatos fugiam captius ad Indos?
 da sedem profugo. potuit Latonia frater
 saxa (nec inuideo) defigere Delon et imis
 commendare fretis; cara summouit ab arce
 hostiles Tritonis aquas; uidi ipse potentem 185
 gentibus Eois Epaphum dare iura, nec ullas
 Cyllene secreta tubas Minoae curat
 Ida: quid heu tantum nostris offenderis aris?
 hic tibi (quando minor iam nostra potentia) noctes
 Herculeae placitusque uagae Nycteidis ardor, 190
 hic Tyrium genus et nostro felicius igne
 taurus: Agenoreos saltem tutare nepotes".
 (*Theb.* 7.151-92)

Thus, as he was, in tears, dishevelled and disfigured in his dressing, in front of Jupiter (who happened to be alone in heaven) he stopped, never before seen in such guise (nor did the father ignore the reason why), and he spoke out as a suppliant: "Is it your Thebes that you are destroying, most excellent father of the gods? Is your wife so cruel? Do you not pity your beloved land, the hearth that you deceived, and the ashes of my people? So be it, that time you hurled fire from the clouds against your will, I believe; but now you are again bringing black conflagration on the earth, this time without having sworn by the Styx, and without the request of your deceived mistress. What is your limit? Is it for me, father, angry but kind, that you have the thunderbolt? But you will not visit in such fashion the thresholds of Danäe, nor the Parrhasian forest, nor Leda's Amyclae. Obviously of all your sons I am the lineage least cared for? But wasn't I that sweet burden that you carried, the one that you dee-

med worthy of receiving again life's threshold, a womb torn away, and a mother's months? Add that the unwarlike throng, rarely trained in camps, knows only my armies, my battles – that is to bind their hair with leaves and to whirl at the blowing of pipes; they fear the wands of the brides, and the battles of the mothers. How are they to suffer the trumpets and Mars? Look what battles he is preparing in his burning fury! What if he were to lead your Curetes to arms and bid them to fight with their light harmless shields? And you even choose hated Argos against them – was there no other enemy? O father, your commands are harder than the danger itself. We pay the penalty, to make rich my step-mother's Mycenae! By all means, I yield. But where should I take the sacred rites of the dead people, and whatever the mother who unfortunately conceived me left for burial? Where do you bid me to go? To Thrace and Lycurgus' forests? Or shall I flee as a captive among the Indians over whom I once triumphed? Give a fugitive a place to dwell. My brother (I grudge him not) could fix Delos, the rocks of Latona, and commend her to the depth of the sea; the Tritonian could keep hostile waters away from her dear citadel; I have seen with my eyes powerful Epaphus rule the people of the East, nor does hidden Cyllene or Minoan Ida trouble for trumpets. Why, alas, are you only offended by my altars? Here (since I am of little influence to you already), you have the nights of Hercules and your chosen love of the wandering daughter of Nycteus, here you have the Tyrian line, and the bull who was more fortunate than my fire; protect, at least, Agenor's grandsons".

The first and obvious problem with Juno's speech is that she fails to emphasise that it would be in Jupiter's interests to avoid a wedding that would irretrievably corrupt and implicate in the incestuous line of Oedipus not just one, but two of his progenies, since Adrastus and Argia can boast double ancestry from Jupiter, from his unions with Io and with Plotis³³. Instead, Juno focuses the speech on herself and on her own links to Argos (1.251-3), belittling Jupiter's affairs with Io and Danäe as offences to her honour rather than as personal reasons for Jupiter to spare their line (1.253-5). An ironic use of Homeric intertextuality also contributes to undermine her request, since in the fourth book of the *Iliad* Hera had invited Zeus to consider destroying her dearest cities, Argos included, as long as Troy would be destroyed too – lines that Statius' Juno explicitly evokes when she makes her plea for Argos (*Il.* 4.51-3 ἢ τοι ἐμοὶ τρεῖς μὲν πολὺ φίλταται εἰσι πόλεις, / Ἀργός τε Σπάρτη τε καὶ εὐρυάγνια Μυκῆνη· / τὰς διαπέρσαι, ὅτ' ἄν τοι ἀπέχθωνται περὶ κῆρι·, "I have three cities that are far dearest in my sight, Argos and Sparta and broadwayed Mycenae; lay these waste whenever they are hateful to your heart"; cf. *Theb.* 1.260-2 *quin*

33 — See *Theb.* 1.392 [Adrastus] *utroque Iouem a sanguine ducens*, "related in blood to Jove on either side", with Heuvel 1932 *ad loc.* and Hill 2008: 134-5 on the connection between Jupiter and Adrastus.

age, si tanta est thalami discordia sancti, / et Samon et ueteres armis excinde Mycenae, / uerte solo Sparten)³⁴. Moreover, her definition of Argos as the “land of Tantalus” towards the close of the speech (1.279 *Tantaleis... terris*) is also surprisingly counterproductive, given that it is precisely the angered memory of Tantalus’ offence that has caused Jupiter’s resolve to punish the city (1.245-7)³⁵. By comparison, Bacchus’ speech seems almost to have learned its effective rhetoric from his step-mother’s mistakes, since, as Smolenaars notes, all the elements that make up his argument “lead to the same conclusion: the destruction of Thebes would be against Jupiter’s own best interests”³⁶. Retrospectively, Bacchus’ speech sheds light on the fact that Juno should have reminded Jupiter of his emotional attachments to Argos. But this would have also meant for Juno to accept wholeheartedly the legitimacy of her husband’s extra-marital affairs, which she only unconvincingly claims to forgive (1.256 *ignosco*). As a destitute patron goddess of marriage, Juno is cornered yet again by Jupiter’s and Bacchus’ rhetoric, and has no choice but to declare the worthlessness of the institution she embodies, if she is to craft an effective speech in support of Argos. While echoing and twisting his step-mother’s rhetoric and highlighting her flaws, Bacchus also reminds us of a crucial gender imbalance in the power relations between the two, an imbalance that he puts to good use in the effective close of his plea, when he finally reveals the different tools that he can use while speaking as a son rather than as a sister or wife.

A first look at the beginning of Bacchus’ speech already shows the god learning from Juno’s shortcomings. Even before speaking, Bacchus uses “tears” (7.151 *lacrimis*) instead of anger, and assumes the pose of a “suppliant” (7.154 *supplex*). He learns directly from Virgil’s Venus (*Aen.* 1.228 *lacrimis oculos suffusa nitentis*, “with her shining eyes suffused with tears”) and from Virgil’s Ascanius (*Aen.* 9.624 *constitit, ante Iouem supplex per uota precatus*, “he stopped, praying first to Jupiter with vows, as a suppliant”), but also from Virgil’s Juno as successfully *supplex* of Aeolus at *Aen.* 1.64, all intertexts that already remind us of Jupiter’s personal and institutional role of “Father”, further stressed by Statius at 7.154 (*patrem*)³⁷. While Juno’s emphasis is on herself (1.250-1 *mene... me*; 253

34 — On the intertextual irony see Juhnke 1972: 57 (noting that Juno’s addition of Samos to the list is a Virgilian echo from *Aen.* 1.16), Briguglio 2017: 301. Frisby 2013: 18-22 and Cannizzaro 2020 emphasise the irony of the temporal anachronism in the intertextual echo, since Juno is infringing a promise that she has technically not yet pronounced.

35 — Although possibly unmotivated, see n. 21.

36 — Smolenaars 1994: 74.

37 — Note that Juno’s speech to Aeolus starts with a reminder that his power was accorded by “the father of the gods” (*Aen.* 1.65 *diuum pater*). These intertexts are used together with other Virgilian echoes (Jupiter at *Aen.* 1.225-6 *sic uertice caeli / constitit*; Neptune at *Aen.* 1.130 *nec latuere doli fratrem Iunonis et irae*). It is especially interesting that Bacchus seems to be modelling the beginning of the speech upon another Virgilian wife’s words: Amata’s reproach of Latinus at *Aen.* 7.359-62.

iuuem), Bacchus' is on his addressee (7.155 *tuas*; 156 *te*), and he echoes and corrects Juno's sarcastic address (1.250 *o iustissime diuum*) by emphasising Jupiter's fatherly role, with a poignant reminder of the "sowing" of his divine descendance (7.155 *diuum sator optime*)³⁸. Unlike Juno with Argos, Bacchus effectively stresses Jupiter's ties to Thebes (7.155 *tuas... Thebas*?; 7.156 *telluris amatae*), subtly reminding him of his love affair with Semele (7.157), and taking care never to mention Oedipus' guilt. By contrast, Juno had attempted to circumvent the double Jovian ancestry of Adrastus: either the kingdom or the renown of the kingdom belongs to Phoroneus (251-2 *Phoroneos incluta fama / sceptrum*)³⁹: this is an autochthonous king of the Peloponnese, son of the river Inachus and brother of Io, whose father judged Hera master of the Peloponnese against Poseidon, who thus made the waters in the region disappear⁴⁰. While Phoroneus has a special connection to Juno, it is also important that he has no ties with either of Jupiter's Argive lines. At the end of the epic, we will again see Juno help what she continues to consider the house of Phoroneus, when she leads the "Phoronean mothers" to Athens (12.465 *Iuno Phoroneas inducit praeuia matres*). Juno's use of the concessive *licet* (1.253), which introduces Jupiter's import in the Argive line of descent (his affairs with Io and Danäe, both unnamed at 1.253-5) as if something of no hindrance to Juno's love for Argos, serves to activate a rhetorical meiosis by belittling her husband's status in the city. Similarly, her choice of the adjective *Phariae* (1.254, "of the island of Pharos", metonymical for "Egyptian") to describe Io is also in line with her attempt to disconnect Jupiter's lover from Argos, and anticipates her placing of Io in Egypt at lines 1.264-5, a transferral that Juno herself had famously caused in the myth by tormenting the metamorphosed rival with a stinging gadfly, before agreeing on her metamorphosis into the goddess Isis⁴¹.

The following section of Bacchus' speech, where he reminds his father of his affair with Semele, offers another point of contrast with Juno's use of Semele in Book 1. Bacchus forgives Jupiter for his mother's death, claiming that he is willing to believe that he set her on fire against his will

See Smolenaars 1994 *ad loc.*, who believes there may be even an explicit reference to Amata in the last word of line 7.156 *amatae*. Schiesaro 2019: 200 interprets Bacchus' modelling upon Virgil's Venus and Juno as a intertextual clue on how the god appears to be torn between "action and inaction, progression and delay".

38 — Cf. again Varro *Ling.* 5.65: *Pater, quod patefacit semen*, "father" (*pater*) because he "discloses" (*patefacit*) the seed'.

39 — The genitive *Phoroneos* can modify either *fama* or *sceptrum*.

40 — For the legend see Pausan. 2.15.5 and other sources in Heuvel 1932 and Briguglio 2017 *ad loc.* In the other instances in the *Thebaid*, Phoroneus seems to be described as the model of a good and authoritative king (*Th.* 1.542 *senior... Phoroneus*; 2.219 *placidus... Phoroneus*; 4.589 *mitis... Phoroneus*); see also Ovid. *Met.* 1.668 and 2.524.

41 — Ovid. *Met.* 1.734-47.

(7.158 *inuitum... ignem*). Confident of Jupiter's love for Semele and of his father's pain in remembering her death, Bacchus envisages Jupiter's second attack on Thebes as a second murder of his lover (7.159 *en iterum*). The sarcastic phrase *paelicis arte rogatus* (7.160) brings Bacchus' provocations to a climax: the derogatory use of *paelex* should prompt Jupiter's reaction in defence of his former lover, *arte* would reignite anger against his wife, by reminding him of Juno's "trick" against Semele, and the passive *rogatus* implies an impotence on Jupiter's part that the god should well be willing to prove false. At this point, Bacchus can safely add his request that Jupiter should limit his punishment of Thebes (7.161), shrouding it with a reminder of their kinship (7.161 *nobis pater*) as well as with a *captatio beneuolentiae* (7.161 *iratusque bonusque*). By contrast, at *Theb.* 1.256-8, Juno fashions Jupiter's affair with Semele as if *that* were the guilt of Thebes, focussing not on the reasons why Thebes should be punished in Jupiter's view, but on her hatred towards the city, since that is the place where Jupiter dared to unite with a mortal without covering such adultery under a metamorphosis. At *Theb.* 1.257-8, she makes her husband solely responsible for the killing of Semele, only hinting at her own role in the episode through the ambiguity of *mea fulmina* (1.258), which reminds us of how Semele died because of her desire to experience a sexual union with Jupiter in the shape he used with his legitimate wife, and thus at the same time underscores Juno's rightful co-possession of Jupiter's thunderbolts in their marital union. When Juno makes the point that Thebes should atone for its deeds straight after mentioning Semele (1.259 *facta luant Thebae*), the audience is left with the feeling that what Thebes should atone for is Jupiter's adultery rather than Oedipus' incest. It would thus be easy to counterargue that Semele, and Thebes with it, has in fact already been punished for such adultery, a point that Bacchus does not fail to pick up when he envisages a second attack on Thebes as a second attack on his mother. Bacchus' argument resonates in an epigonal epic that is always tired of its repetitive nature, and in which Jupiter comes onto the scene as equally weary of being the stock character in charge of punishment (1.215-7 *quonam usque nocentum / exigat in poenas? taedet saeuire corusco / fulmine...*, "how much longer shall I be driven to punish the guilty? I am weary of raging with my flashing bolt...")⁴². His question whether this epic has a limit (161 *quis modus?*) re-echoes Jupiter's feelings, and looks towards the future as Bacchus attempts to prevent further punishment of Thebes. By comparison, as we shall see in more detail below⁴³, Juno looks backwards when she wonders if there is a temporal limit to ancestral faults

42 — See Briguglio (2017: 272): "Giove rivela subito la propria epigonale stanchezza e il peso della tradizione letteraria che grava sul suo personaggio".

43 — See below pp. 194, 196-7.

(1.268-70 *a quo tempore... saecula retro emendare sat est?*), reminding us of Jupiter's failure in the *Metamorphoses* to wipe out the evil in the human race with the flood of Book 1 – a failure that was underscored by Ovid's narrative itself, starting with Lycaon's survival to the flood.

Bacchus tops his reasoning with a proposal that is an evident echo of Juno's argument at 1.270-9, namely that Jupiter should direct his attack against other city-states that he fathered, and which, unlike Thebes, have not yet been punished for his adulteries. These are Argos itself (because of Danäe), Arcadia (because of Callisto) and Amyclae / Sparta (for Leda) (7.162-3). Bacchus seems to pick Sparta and Arcadia from the list of places that Juno herself proposed Jupiter to strike in Book 1 (1.262; 273-8). A good reader of his step-mother's speech, he turns her rhetoric in defense of Argos against Argos itself. These twists on Juno's arguments continue in the following lines, when he re-echoes rather explicitly Juno's request to leave Argos out of the war, with the pleas climaxing in the middle of their respective speeches: 7.175-6 *quin etiam inuisos (sic hostis defuit?) Argos / eligis?*, an echo of Juno's 1.259 *cur hostes eligis Argos?*. In comparison to Argos, he claims, the Thebans are "unwarlike" and defenceless (7.168 *imbelles*). This is an unexpected adjective to use to describe a people who descend from a race of fighting warriors⁴⁴, but the comparison with warlike Argos was aided by Juno herself when she described the city as rich in warriors and wealth (1.253). The penalty that Thebes is paying, Bacchus insists, is to make Juno's city even wealthier (7.177 *nouercales luimus*⁴⁵ *ditare Mycenae!*). The whole argument must be understood as a rhetorical distortion of, and commentary upon, Juno's words in Book 1: she claimed that Thebes had to pay a penalty, arguably because of Jupiter's adultery with Semele, but that penalty had already been paid with Semele's death itself. And if that wasn't enough, then what better penalty for Thebes than enlisting the powerful city of Mycenae / Argos against it in the war? It is also worth noting here that while Juno in her speech singles out Argos and Mycenae as two different places (1.261), as she will do again in her speech in Book 9 (9.514-5), Bacchus does not hesitate to conflate the two. The ambiguous identification of Argos and Mycenae is common in Greek Tragedy as well as within the *Thebaid* itself⁴⁶. However, Juno and Bacchus

44 — Bacchic arts can indeed be particularly violent, unlike Bacchus' deceitful presentation here, but the adjective also points to the general metamorphosis of Bacchus' unusually tame character in the poem (see Schiesaro 2019). As Smolenaars 1994: *ad loc.* notes, the comparison to the Curetes (7.173-4) is similarly misleading, since in many literary passages they are not portrayed as unwarlike and defenceless. Note perhaps a possible play on the violence of Bacchus / Liber in Eteocles' speech to his army at *Theb.* 7.377-8 *nam liber in arma / impetus*.

45 — Unlike Shackleton Bailey, I prefer *luimus* (the reading of the Puteanus) to *ruimus* of the paradoxis, not least because it echoes Juno's words at 1.259 (*facta luant Thebae*). See Smolenaars 1994 *ad loc.*

46 — See Rosenbloom 2014. In the *Thebaid*, Mycenae and Argos seem to be the same city at

may have their motives for choosing whether or not to conflate the two, since Mycenae is remembered in the first books of the poem as the city where the gory feast of Thyestes took place (1.325, 2.184, 4.306-8), an event that Juno may well be willing to dissociate from Argos, and that Bacchus would instead be happy to associate with it, as a veritable double for Tantalus' feast⁴⁷.

The final section of Bacchus' speech continues to shed light on the rhetorical faults of Juno's plea, only to close, in ring-composition, with Bacchus' decisive resource, namely an appeal to Jupiter's paternal piety. Bacchus' rhetoric here is again constructed in careful opposition to Juno's. The final section of her speech included a list of places dear to Jupiter, but deserving of punishment (1.273-9). This sounded even to the narrator like a list of "insults" (1.283 *conuicia*) against Jupiter's favourite cities, and seemed to have the counterproductive effect of stressing the similarity between these places and Argos, another city that Jupiter fathered but whose guilt Juno erroneously reminds us of, by referring to it as the "land of Tantalus" (279). Here, Bacchus similarly includes a list of cities dear to Jupiter, but the reasoning for the list is to make precisely the opposite argument to Juno's, namely that these cities resemble Thebes in their being deserving of his paternal pity rather than his vengeful anger. What matters most in his argument is the father-son relationship, which creates a sharp contrast with Juno's role as Jupiter's sister and wife. While echoing with a submissive tone of deference the heated opening of Juno's speech (7.178-80 *quo... abire iubes?*; cf. 1.250-1 *mene... bello certare iubes?*) and embodying the reconciling Juno of *Aeneid* 12 (cf. 7.178 *cedo equidem* and *Aen.* 12.818 *cedo equidem*)⁴⁸, Bacchus imitates Venus' Antenor-example (*Aen.* 1.242-9)⁴⁹ and portrays himself as a second Aeneas (7.182 *da sedem profugo*; cf. the obvious *Aen.* 1.2 *fato profugus*). Similarly, he stresses the importance of Jupiter's male descent by closing the speech with what sounds like a rhetorical reminder of how Aeneas was allowed to take on his shoulders the destiny of his grandsons, as portrayed in the close of *Aeneid* 8 (cf. Bacchus' ending the speech with *nepotes* at 192 and the last line of *Aen.* 8.731 *attollens umero famamque et fata nepotum*, "lifting on his shoulders the glorious destiny of his grandsons"). In his consciously epigonal request

1.683, 2.119, 7.177, 7.418, 10.16, 11.147, 11.187, 12.116; they are clearly separate at 1.261, 4.306-8, 9.514-5, 11.127-30 and 11.731. Other instances are not as clear.

47 — At 4.56-7 *tecta Mycenae / impia*, Parkes 2012 *ad loc.* is uncertain whether to read a double reference to Thyestes and Tantalus. Note that the geographical ambiguity is matched by an interesting anachronism in the poem, where Thyestes' feast is referred to as an event of the past at 1.325 and 2.184, but then seems to happen at the same time as the Seven are chosen at 4.306-8, a notation which fashions Mycenae as a tragic double for Thebes in terms of inter-cine war (4.308 *hic alii miscabant proelia fratres*, "here other brothers were waging war to each other").

48 — See Schiesaro 2019: 214.

49 — See Smolenaars 1994: *ad loc.*

to be treated like a second Aeneas, Bacchus is ready to accept an eventual fall of his city and asks for a different place to settle, just as his half siblings have done. But even this request, together with the feigned assurance that he feels no grudge towards them (7.183 *nec inuideo*)⁵⁰, is fashioned by contrast with Juno's words in Book 1. In his re-echoing of Juno's complaint that Jupiter was "begrudging" her dwelling in Argos and forcing her to leave (1.279-80 *me Tantaleis consistere terris / quae tandem inuidia est?*), Bacchus also highlights how ill-chosen her intertextual models were, since Juno herself attempted to misappropriate the character of Aeneas, by echoing his (unconvincing) plea to Dido in *Aeneid* 4 (*Aen.* 4.349-50 *quae tandem Ausonia Teucros consistere terra / inuidia est?*, "Why do you begrudge the Teucrians to settle at last in the Ausonian land?"). Bacchus thus fashions himself as the pitiful, pious and magnanimous illegitimate son whose character has to be read in direct contrast with that of his evil stepmother. As a supporter of Jupiter's adulterous relationships, and in contrast to Juno's monogamous envy towards Io, Danäe, and Semele (1.253-8), he feigns no enmity towards Epaphus (7.185-6); in contrast to Juno's slandering of the Cretans as liars (1.278-9), he aligns himself with Minos and with Rhadamanthus (7.187-8); as a response to Juno's claim that Ida is guilty (1.278 *Ida nocens*)⁵¹, Bacchus stresses the in-nocence of the Curetes' shields while also aligning their weapons with those of his own followers (7.174 *innocuis... peltis*)⁵². And he doesn't mind that his siblings receive honours, but rhetorically wonders why he should be the only one to suffer (7.188). That Jupiter has other sons is not only of no hindrance to him: rather, it offers him a productive opportunity to stress Jupiter's attachments in Thebes (to Alcmene, Antiope and Europa: 7.189-92) as a final plea for the destiny of this Rome-like Thebes⁵³. In comparison to Juno's speech – which similarly closes with a plea to spare his own race (1.281 *generis miseresce tui*), but after offering the sole example of Tantalus, and before adding a final insulting line towards Jupiter's own kingdoms (1.282 *sunt impia late regna tibi*) – Bacchus' is indeed a "clever piece of rhetoric"⁵⁴.

Bacchus' trumping of Juno's rhetoric in Book 7 of the *Thebaid* is only part of a larger picture which sees the goddess being robbed of her

50 — Jupiter himself reads through Bacchus' pretence: 7.193 *inuidiam risit pater*.

51 — On which see further below p. 202.

52 — As Smoleenars 1994: *ad loc.* notes, the comparison allows Bacchus to make "an emotional and very effective argument *ad hominem* by placing Jupiter in a similar situation".

53 — On Thebes as second-Rome already in Ovid's *Metamorphoses* 3 see Hardie 1990.

54 — Vessey 1973: 83 in relation to Juno's speech, see n.10. Schiesaro 2019: 203 comments upon "Bacchus" display of rhetorical weakness and ineffectiveness' more from the point of view of Jupiter's reply and the inconsequential nature of the speech in the following narrative than of the internal structure of the speech.

Virgilian role in the epic by both her step-son and her husband / brother. This has already been noted by many following Ganiban, but while scholarship has commented on how Virgil's Juno modifies the characters of Bacchus and Jupiter, there has been little to no attempt to examine where this role reversal leaves Statius' Juno herself⁵⁵. This is remarkable, because what is at stake in the *Thebaid* is more than a literary game. Here, the male son who survived his mother's "femicide" at the hands of his father is making use of many of the tools of his silenced step-mother to appeal to Jupiter's male sensitivities, as his rhetoric reminds the father of a number of sexual encounters and of his mostly male progeny – with the patent exception of Minerva (7.185), whose androgynous gender status is nevertheless ambiguous⁵⁶, and whose birth from Jupiter's head (a clear parallel to Bacchus') helps to convey the utopic picture of a world whose (hu)mankind does not need women for reproduction⁵⁷. Such a picture does not fail to be part of Bacchus' speech, as he offers Jupiter what is supposed to be a pleasant memory of the time when the father supplied the role of the dead pregnant mother in the gestation and delivery of Bacchus' "sweet weight" (7.165-6 *dulce ferenti / pondus eram*) – namely, when he again had usurped the female reproductive function as an assertion and confirmation of male dominance and patriarchy⁵⁸.

Juno's silence: tanta thalami discordia

Bacchus' and Juno's speeches are equally ineffective, since they both meet the immovability of Jupiter's words (1.290-2 *mansurum et non reuocabile uerbum, / nil fore quod dictis flectar*, "my words shall be fixed and irrevocable; nothing can be said to change my course"; 7.197-8 *immoto deducimur orbe / fatorum*, "I am spun by the immovable wheel of the fates"). However, they elicit a completely different reaction. While Jupiter cannot grant Bacchus' request, he responds to the son with laughter, teasing, and calm affection (7.193-5 *inuidiam risit pater, et... tranquillus ad*

55 — Ganiban 2007: 52-3 on Jupiter as Juno; 99 on Bacchus as Juno (cf. already Feeney 1991: 354). See Schiesaro 2019: 198 on Bacchus.

56 — Parallels between Minerva and Bacchus in terms of gender-bending are evident in Statius' *Achilleid*; see especially Heslin's discussion of the spear and the thyrsus: Heslin 2005: 237-42.

57 — Minerva's birth in Hesiod's *Theogony* did not technically lack a mother, since Zeus had swallowed pregnant Metis (*Theog.* 899-900), but note that both in Homer's Hymn to Apollo (*Hymn* 3.305-54) and in Ovid's *Fasti* it is Hera / Juno herself who interprets it as being "with no mother" (*Fast.* 5.231-2 *sancta Iouem Iuno, nata sine matre Minerua, / officio doluit non eguisse suo*, "holy Juno grieved that Jupiter had not needed her services when Minerva was born without a mother"; *Hymn* 3.323 πῶς ἔτλης οἶος τεκέειν γλαυκῶπιν Ἀθήνην, "how could you give birth to Glaucopis Athena on your own?). It is interesting that in the Homeric Hymn Hera portrays herself as a missed mother to Athena (*Hymn.* 3.324 οὐκ ἂν ἐγὼ τεκόμην, "couldn't I have given birth to her?"). On the Homeric Hymn see Pirenne-Delforge and Pironti 2016: 85-100.

58 — See Zeitlin 1978: 168-9, 179 n. 21.

oscula tollit / inque uicem placida orsa refert..., “the father laughed at this reproach, and... calmly he raised him for a kiss and in turn gave his serene answer...”). Not so with Juno. The narrator, as we have seen, dismisses her speech as a mixture of “supplication” and “insult” (1.283 *finierat precibus miscens conuicia Iuno*), but Jupiter’s reaction is hidden in a textual problem that is worth considering briefly. Indeed, the textual opacity of this passage and its history of conjectures may expose the philologists’ preconceptions about this post-Virgilian Juno, as well as showing Statius’ text itself attempting to undermine them. Moreover, a possible, but far from definitive, solution to the problem may highlight a disquieting undercurrent in the Olympians’ marriage chamber, “the subtle psychodrama of marital dialogue”⁵⁹, as well as the memory of an unspoken violence that will be similarly revealed and yet concealed by the Argive women when they summon the goddess in Book 10, as we shall see subsequently. In this section, I would like to suggest that it is this unspoken, old but ever-renewed trauma that keeps Juno away from the narrative of the poem until she is offered the picture of an alternative reality in which she is allowed to exist, and to resume her divine duties, without functioning as an appendix of her husband.

Theb. 1.284-5, the lines immediately preceding Jupiter’s reply, are almost unanimously transmitted as *at non ille grauis dictis quamquam aspera motu / reddidit haec*, with the only exception of the so-called codex Puteanus (P = Parisinus Latinus 8051, from the ninth-tenth century), which before a correction to *motu* read instead *motus* in the close of line 284. *Motus* was the preferred reading among seventeenth- and eighteenth-century editors, who punctuated it as *at non ille grauis, dictis, quamquam aspera, motus / reddidit haec*: “but he, in all his gravity, unmoved by her words, harsh though they were, replied...”⁶⁰. The reading would fit the context in more than one way. Jupiter’s immobility at Juno’s speech (*non... dictis... motus*) would anticipate the immobility of his words as later stressed to both Juno and Bacchus, while his characteristic *grauitas* would recall the “heavy” and again “immutable” “weight” of his previous verdict (1.212-3 *graue et immutabile sanctis / pondus adest uerbis*). As for Juno, the line would contribute, albeit by hypallage, to her characterization as “bitter” and “harsh” (*aspera*), which she carries at least since Virgil’s *Aeneid*, where Jupiter himself described her as *aspera Iuno* (1.279) – a *iunctura* that will define her again in the closing Adonic of a hexameter line in

59 — A formulation I owe to Victoria Rimell.

60 — Gevartius, Gronovius and Beraldus among others, as well as by Amar du Rivier and Lemaire all print *motus*. For a history of these editors, with bibliographical details of the editions, see Berlincourt 2008; see also Emericus Cruceus, who presents *motus* as his own conjecture, in Berlincourt 2011. Beraldus 1824 [or.1685]: 640 offers a paraphrase of the line: “at ille grauis, non motus his uerbis, quamquam acerba sint, haec respondit”.

Propertius (*El.* 4.9.71), Valerius (*Arg.* 6.590) and Statius himself, who puts the epithet in the mouth of Tisiphone in Book 11 of the *Thebaid* (11.211). However, the odd placement of *gravis* in the line does not make the reading fully satisfactory, and modern editors have preferred to go back to the *motu* of the paradosis and read at the end of the line either the ablative of *motus* or the passive supine of *moueo*⁶¹. If we opt for the ablative of *motus*, it remains difficult to decide whose “words” (*dicta*) and whose “movement / emotion / agitation / distress” (*motu*) are being referred to. One option is that Jupiter “was not hard with *his* words, although these sounded harsh because of *his* distress”; another is that Jupiter “was not hard towards *her* words, as harsh as these were because of *her* distress”. Both options are ambiguous and convoluted, and pose at least one grammatical challenge in the change of case between *dictis* and *aspera*, since as Stefano Briguglio notes there is no parallel in Statius to a construct with *quamquam* where the verb is implied and there is no identity in the case between the noun in the main clause and its adjective in the concessive⁶².

This is a much-debated passage, and conjectures have not been left unattempted⁶³. A possible, but far from definitive, solution is to read the line as it is, punctuating it as *at non ille gravis dictis, quamquam aspera motu / reddidit haec...*, and thus understanding *aspera* as qualifying Jupiter’s following words (*haec*), while *reddidit* becomes the verb of the concessive: “but he was not hard with his words, although in his agitation he gave this harsh reply...”⁶⁴. This reading would introduce the bitterness of Jupiter’s speech the same way that Statius will introduce a speech of Tydeus in the following book (*Theb.* 2.392 *iustis miscens tamen aspera*

61 — See Hill 1996; Hall, Ritchie and Edwards 2007.

62 — Briguglio 2017: 314, citing e.g. the case of *Theb.* 5.218-9 *quamquam crudelia, pandam / funera*.

63 — Barth proposed to emend *gravis* in order to make it agree with *motu* (*at non ille graui dictis, quamquam aspera, motu / reddidit haec*, “but he replied with words that did not display severe distress, although they were harsh”) and Courtney attempted to replace *gravis* with *deae* (*at non ille deae dictis, quamquam aspera, motus* “but he, unmoved by the words of the goddess, as harsh as they were...”): see both conjectures in Hill 1996: 13. Shackleton Bailey 2003.i: 62-3 opted for the passive supine of an irrecoverable verb that *exempli gratia* could be something like *captu* (“but the words of his reply were not hard, though harsh to apprehend (?)”), indicating with the question mark of his translation the choice to print *motu* between *cruces desperationis*. Gärtner 2012: 451 proposes to emend *motu* to *mouit* and interpret the passage as an imitation of *Aen.* 2.96 *uerbis odia aspera moui* (“I stirred bitter hatred with my words”), so as to read *at non ille gravis, dictis quamquam aspera mouit, reddidit haec...* (“but he was not resentful towards her, even though she had set in motion violent thoughts with her words, and he replied...”). Cf. also *Aen.* 5.387 *hic gravis Entellum dictis castigat Acestes*, not mentioned by Gärtner.

64 — Mozley 1928: 361-2 seems to hint at something similar in his translation: “but he made reply, not in hard words, though cruel was its purport”, with the note that *aspera* defines his words “because [they] were intended to embroil the brothers yet more”. On *motus* as “a disturbed state of mind, passion, emotion” see *OLD s.v.* 10. Silius offers interesting parallel uses of *asper* with the ablative (*Pun.* 1.148-9 *asper amore / sanguinis*, “harsh in his thirst for blood” and 12.551 *stat celsus et asper ab ira... senatus*, “the senators stand tall and violent from their anger”).

coepit, "he began to speak, mixing however just words with bitterness"), and it could be read as a variation of the line that described Jupiter's first appearance in the poem (re-echoed by Statius in his description Domitian at *Silu.* 1.1.15-16): *Theb.* 1.202 *placido quatiens tamen omnia uultu* ("with a placid face, but nevertheless shaking everything"), where *placido* would correspond to *non... grauis*, *tamen* would correspond to *quamquam*, and *quatiens* to *motu*. Indeed, *motus* is a particularly apt word for Jupiter's agitation: as the commotion of the storming sky, it signals a standard mode of Jupiter's communication with the earth⁶⁵. There would also be good reason to interpret Jupiter's reply to Juno as "harsh", given that, as we have seen, he essentially bids her to the silence and deference that his children are observing, reminding her of his paternal and patriarchal authority (1.287-9). And yet what seems to have caused difficulty to many readers of the line is a conscious or unconscious instinct, probably driven by familiarity with the Juno of the *Aeneid*, to allow *aspera* to modify Juno and her words instead⁶⁶. It is also ironic here that, if both expressions are to refer to Jupiter's words rather than Juno's, the line will already begin to signal the exclusion of Juno's speech from the narrative, rather than contribute to her post-Virgilian vengeful characterisation. In short, while the reading of this passage remains puzzling, it is productive to notice that such meaningful opacity allows us to reflect on the ways in which husband and wife are going to exchange, or "mix" roles in this epic (a mixture that is perhaps anticipated by the *miscens* of line 1.283), prompting us to review our readerly expectations, and gesturing at the possibility that they may deserve to be drawn in radically different ways, as will indeed be the case with Juno from *Thebaid* 10 onwards.

Juno's speech in *Thebaid* 1, as we have seen, strangely fails to mention the contentious issue of the council, namely the wedding of Polynices and Argia. She refers instead to her marriage twice, describing it first as "mighty" (1.257-8 *magni... tori*), then as "sacred", i.e. legitimate (1.260 *thalami... sancti*) – in both cases the marriage is defined metonymically, with the evocation of the domestic reality of the marriage bed (*torus*) and chamber (*thalami*). But the first mention evokes the marriage bed only within the context of Jupiter's intercourse with another woman, and the second introduces the sacred bedroom as the site of a "too great

65 — See for example the movement of Jupiter's hand at Verg. *G.* 1.328-30 *ipse pater... fulmina molitur dextra, quo maxima motu / terra tremat* ("the father himself... brandishes the bolts in his right hand; at its movement the entire earth trembles") and of his head at *Theb.* 7.3 *Iuppiter... concussitque caput motu quo celsa laborant / sidera...* ("Jupiter... shook his head; at its motion the high stars tremble").

66 — Note that the adjective *asper* modifies other females in the epic: Tisiphone (9.166), the mother of Tydeus (10.354), Virtus (10.645).

discord" (1.260 *si tanta est thalami discordia sancti*)⁶⁷. On an intertextual level, as Briguglio notes, this line is the future literary confirmation of Jupiter's words to Juno in *Iliad* 4, when he hoped that the quarrel over Troy would not become cause of great "strife" among them (*Il.* 4.37-8 μή τοῦτο γε νεῖκος ὀπίσω σοὶ καὶ ἐμοὶ μέγ' ἔρισμα μετ' ἀμφοτέροισι γένηται)⁶⁸. It is this very same marital discord that pushes Juno, in the *Aeneid*, to bring *discordia* through Allecto to the potential marriage of Aeneas and Lavinia⁶⁹. But there is more to it in the *Thebaid*, where, as Neil Bernstein writes, "marriage brings many of the same horrors as blood relationships and ancestral lineages"⁷⁰, even when it pertains to the patron goddess of marriage herself. Indeed, *Discordia* here functions as a simultaneously domestic microcosm and universal Olympian macrocosm, of the intercine strife that characterises civil war in and out of the poem; it is an obvious example, as Carole Newlands puts it, of how "the interpenetration of the language of civil war with that of marriage emphasizes the social implications of civil strife"⁷¹.

That the discord within Juno and Jupiter's marriage may be more profound in the *Thebaid* than in the preceding epics is highlighted by Juno's inability to speak and act for much of the poem, and more explicitly by the way in which her character will be portrayed again, nine books later, not by the male narrator but by the artwork of fellow women, in what Bernhard Kytzler has recognised to be a "masterpiece of artistic psychological portraiture"⁷². At *Theb.* 10.56-64, the Argive women, begging the goddess for help, offer her a gift that contains a telling ecphrasis:

peplum etiam dono, cuius mirabile textum
nulla manu sterilis nec dissociata marito
uersarat, calathis castae uelamina diuae
haud spernenda ferunt, uariis ubi plurima floret
purpura picta modis mixtoque incenditur auro.

60

67 — I follow the paradosis in reading *tanta*, unlike Shackleton Bailey, who accepts Gronovius' emendation into *tanti* ("if the discord of our marriage bed is worth so much..."), on the model of Ovid *Met.* 3.424 *aut si rescierit, sunt, o sunt iurgia tanti!*

68 — Briguglio 2017: 301; cf. also Hom. *Il.* 1.520-1 ἡ δὲ καὶ αὐτως μ' αἰεὶ ἐν ἀθανάτοισι θεοῖσι / νεῖκε, "as it is she is always in discord with me among the immortal gods" with Pirenne-Delforge and Pironi 2016: 53-7.

69 — See *Aen.* 7.545 *en, perfecta tibi bello discordia tristi* ("look! Discord has been accomplished by you in grim war"), where *discordia* is a "formal bow" to Ennius' *Discordia*, see Horsfall 2000: 360.

70 — Bernstein 2015: 147.

71 — Newlands 2016: 143. This is the third instance of *discordia* in the poem after two notions of discord among allied kingdoms and brothers (*Theb.* 1.130 *sociis comes discordia regnis* and 1.137 *indomitos praeceps discordia fratres*); importantly, *Discordia* also happens to have given the finishing touch to the necklace of Harmonia (2.288 *tota pressit Discordia dextra*), symbolic of a tradition of ominous wedding unions. On *discordia* evoking civil war in these passages see Bernstein 2015: 147 and Briguglio 2017: 216-7.

72 — Kytzler 1968: 60 "eine Meisterleistung psychologischer Gestaltungskunst".

ipsa illic magni thalamo desponsa Tonantis,
 expers conubii et timide positura sororem,
 lumine demisso pueri Iouis oscula libat
 simplex et nondum furtis offensa mariti.
 (*Theb.* 10.56-64)

They are also carrying in baskets a robe as a gift. No childless or unmarried woman had worked the marvellous texture of these veils, not to be scorned by the chaste goddess, where much purple, embroidered in various ways, is in bloom, and inflamed with commingled gold. On the veils is the goddess herself, betrothed to the chamber of the great Thunderer, unexperienced of wedlock and fearful of putting off her role as sister; with her eyes downcast she touches the lips of the boy Jupiter; she is candid, and not yet offended by her husband's deceits.

The women have gathered as suppliants at the Heraeum (10.49-50 *Argolici supplex in margine templi / coetus*), where they implore the icon of "sceptred Juno" (10.51 *sceptraferae Iunonis*). It is this ivory statue that the Argive mothers cover with the robe, as they make their plea to Juno (10.65-6 *hoc tunc Argolicae sanctum uelamine matres / induerant ebur*). Given the mention of the ivory, this may anachronistically recall the chryselephantine statue by Polykleitos that is carefully described by Pausanias, with Hera seated on a throne with a crown with Graces and Seasons worked upon it, a pomegranate in one hand and a sceptre in the other⁷³. The pomegranate, which Pausanias glosses as an "unspeakable" matter (ἀπορρητότερος... λόγος), probably associates the goddess with the Eleusinian Mysteries and with the myth of Kore-Persephone, signifying a matrimonial dimension, alongside the sovereignty indicated by the sceptre⁷⁴. Pausanias further tells us that upon the sceptre a cuckoo is seated, alluding to the story that when Zeus was in love with "chaste / virgin / maiden Hera" (παρθένου τῆς Ἥρας), he metamorphosed into this bird in order to be caught by her to be her pet⁷⁵. The full version of this story, narrated by a scholiast on Theocritus 15.64 (who claims to have found it the work of Aristokles on the cult of Hermione) has it that Zeus, in order to conquer Hera, changed himself into a cuckoo and waited for her on a mountain (mount Thornax, renamed Kokkygion after this myth). He set

73 — Paus. 2.17.4 τὸ δὲ ἄγαλμα τῆς Ἥρας ἐπὶ θρόνου κάθηται μεγέθει μέγα, χρυσοῦ μὲν καὶ ἐλέφαντος, Πολυκλείτου δὲ ἔργον· ἔπεισι δὲ οἱ στέφανος Χάριτας ἔχων καὶ Ὕρας ἐπιεργασμένας, καὶ τῶν χειρῶν τῇ μὲν καρπὸν φέρει ροιᾶς, τῇ δὲ σκῆπτρον. τὰ μὲν οὖν ἐς τὴν ροιᾶν – ἀπορρητότερος γὰρ ἔστιν ὁ λόγος – ἀφείσθω μοι· Note that Pausanias 2.17.5 mentions two more ancient effigies of Hera: an old image of Hera on a pillar and a small seated image made of wild-pear wood and dedicated in Tiryns by Peirarus, grandson of Phoroneus. See Pirenne-Delforge and Pironti 2016: 129.

74 — Pirenne-Delforge and Pironti 2016: 130 on the pomegranate; 132 on the cuckoo.

75 — Paus. 2.17.4 κόκκυγα δὲ ἐπὶ τῷ σκῆπτρῳ καθῆσθαι φασὶ λέγοντες τὸν Δία, ὅτε ἦρα παρθένου τῆς Ἥρας, ἐς τοῦτον τὸν ὄρνιθα ἀλλαγῆναι, τὴν δὲ ἄτε παίγνιον θηρᾶσαι.

in motion a terrible storm, and when Hera saw Zeus-the-cuckoo shivering with cold she took him up and folded him in her cloak. At which point Zeus suddenly metamorphosed back into himself and raped her (τὸν δὲ Δία εὐθέως μεταβαλεῖν τὴν ὄψιν καὶ ἐπιλαβέσθαι τῆς Ἥρας)⁷⁶. While a reminder of a myth which featured *Hera Parthenia* (a common cult title of the goddess at Argos among other places)⁷⁷, the cuckoo is also associated with the coming of spring, and thus with the “blooming” of both agriculture and female sexuality, underscored by the “Seasons” (Ὠραὶ) and “Graces” (Χάριτες) engraved upon Hera’s crown, and the domain of Hera also by means of her other Argive epithet *Antheia*, “blooming”⁷⁸.

Statius’ text reflects some of these cult associations. The weaving and offering of clothing to Hera is attested by both textual and material evidence in a number of cult places including Argos, where Callimachus among others writes of the Argive women weaving a “sacred *patos*” to Hera (fr. 66 Pfeiffer ἀγνὸν... πάτος), a passage that has already been connected to the scene in the *Thebaid*⁷⁹. Juno’s Argive cult titles are present too: *Hera Antheia* may well be recalled in the passage by the way in which the purple on the Argive women’s robe in the *Thebaid* is “blooming” (10.59 *floret*), while *Hera Parthenia* seems to be immediately evoked by Statius in his glossing of Juno as *casta diva* (10.58), where the epithet *casta* (“chaste”) indicates her role as the goddess of legitimate marriage while at the same time anticipating the picture of virgin Juno that is embroidered on the veil. What the Argive mothers seem to be setting in motion here is a re-enactment of Juno’s wedding: they are veiling the icon of the goddess just like they would veil a would-be bride, with veils whose purple recalls the Roman *flammeum*⁸⁰ and the bride’s loss of virginity as it mixes with the golden “fire” of Zeus (10.60 *mixtoque incenditur auro*). In this act, the epithet *casta* brings Juno back to a pre-marital status, a status whose loss is depicted visually in the robe’s ecphrasis, capturing the very moment of Juno’s fearful hesitation in casting off her role as Jupiter’s sister as if she were taking off a vest (10.62 *timide positura sororem*). In the double movement of the scene, the mothers’ action of dressing chaste Juno seems to be matched and contrasted by the opposite movement of Juno undressing herself of her own sisterhood in the *mise en abyme* of the robe’s ecphrasis. The paradoxical picture of the maiden goddess of

76 — Schol. Theocr. *Id.* 15.64 = Aristocl. 33 F 3 Jacoby; see Pirenne-Delforge and Pironti 2016: 129-36.

77 — On *Hera Parthenia* in Argos see a scholion to Pind. *Ol.* 6. 149g Drachmann with Pirenne-Delforge and Pironti 2016: 124. See also Cannizzaro (2020, forthcoming).

78 — Pirenne-Delforge and Pironti 2016: 132-4.

79 — See Pirenne-Delforge and Pironti 2016: 125-7 and Cannizzaro (2020, forthcoming) with further bibliography.

80 — On the red colour of bridal veils, see Llewellyn-Jones 2003: 226-7.

marriage as “unexperienced of marriage” (10.62 *expers conubii*) seems to point towards the ominous future of this union in its possible echo of Virgil’s Dido and her wish to have lived “like a wild beast”, “without experience of the bed-chamber” (*Aen.* 4.550 *non licuit thalami expertem sine crimine uitam / degere more ferae*), while a further Virgilian echo of the *oscula* between Jupiter and Venus in *Aeneid* 1 – a passage that already seemed to cause embarrassment in Servius – underscores the incestuous nature of Jupiter’s kisses (cf. 10.63 *pueri Iouis oscula libat* and *Aen.* 1.256 *oscula libauit natae*)⁸¹.

The ecphrasis on the robe is left open to interpretation of the legitimacy of the union between Juno and Jupiter, and despite the text’s emphasis on Juno’s modesty and innocence, which may well echo epithalamic topoi (62 *timide*, 63 *lumine demisso*, 64 *simplex*), readers may be expected to detect an allusion to the episode of a secret pre-marital intercourse between the two that is mentioned, from Zeus’ perspective at least, as early as in Homer’s *Iliad*⁸². We may thus stay alert to the counterintuitive possibility of adding her own *furtum* among those “illicit unions” of her husband that will cause her offence in the traditional narrative (64 *non-dum furtis offensa mariti*). That Statius is capable of configuring her first union with Jupiter both as a *furtum* and as a *stuprum* is confirmed by a parallel passage of the *Achilleid*⁸³, where Jupiter’s rape of Juno serves as point of comparison for Achilles’ rape of Deidamia:

Sic sub matre Rhea iuuenis regnator Olympi
oscula securae dabat insidiosa sorori
frater adhuc, medii donec reuerentia cessit
sanguinis et uersos germana expauit amores.
(*Ach.* 1.588-91) 590

So the young ruler of Olympus under mother Rhea would give deceitful kisses to his unsuspecting sister, still only her brother, until the reverence due to shared blood gave way and the sister started to fear the change of love.

81 — Servius *ad Aen.* 1.256 glosses *libauit* as “leuiter tetigit” and takes *oscula* (in opposition to *basia* and *sauia*) as the kisses that one would give to children. He adds that others interpreted *oscula* literally, as an affective diminutive for Venus’ face (“quasi minora et teneriora filiae ora”), which Jupiter drives closer to his, like one would do with a child’s. Servius seems to be echoing this very line in Jupiter’s kissing of Bacchus at the end of his speech (*Theb.* 7.193 *ad oscula tollit*), and to use the whole passage as an intertext at various points in the *Thebaid* (see Hershkowitz 1997).

82 — *Il.* 14.295-6 οἷον ὅτε πρῶτόν περ ἐμίσγέσθην φιλότῃ, / εἰς εὐνὴν φοιτῶντε, φίλους λήθοντε τοκῆας, “just as when they first had joined in love, going off to bed hiding from their dear parents”. See Pirenne-Delforge and Pironti 2016: 34-5, Massimilla 2004 and Cannizzaro (2020, forthcoming) with further sources.

83 — On how Achilles’ and Deidamia’s relationship is conceived as *furtum amoris* see Sanna 2007: 207 n. 3.

In this simile of the *Achilleid*, Juno swiftly changes from being “free from worries” (*Ach.* 1.589 *securae*) about Jupiter’s kisses to experiencing a very concrete fear (*Ach.* 1.591 *expauit*), just as Jupiter’s own reverential fear (589 *reuerentia*) gives way to his incestuous lust. Her brother’s approaches are explicitly labelled as full of guile (*Ach.* 1.589 *insidiosa*), emphasizing the deceitful disguise of Jupiter as brother (*Ach.* 1.590 *frater adhuc*) – a match for Achilles’ disguise as maiden, and perhaps the archetype of those “affairs in disguise” that Juno in the *Thebaid* claims to be able to forgive to him (*Theb.* 1.256 *mentitis ignosco toris*).

What the Argive women are offering to Juno, by veiling her and portraying her as “chaste”, is the snapshot of a time that predated both Jupiter’s rape and the development of her epic identity as Jupiter’s sister and wife. That the fellow women can only express grief at Juno’s original union with, or rape at the hands of, Jupiter through the medium of weaving is a characteristic feature of the repression of female voice that Statius may well have inherited from Ovid’s epic among others, and its use of weaving to highlight the victimization of women in the episodes of Arachne (*Met.* 6.1-145) or Philomela (*Met.* 6.424-674)⁸⁴. If the Argive women, whom war has left bereft of their husbands, are asking the goddess for protection of their marital bonds, it is significant and at the same time paradoxical that they are doing so by attempting to turn back to a time that predated the discord of Juno’s own marriage – that very discord by which her standard role as protector of marriage was usurped⁸⁵. Moreover, it is telling that the combination of the epithet *casta*, the word *peplum* to describe the robe, and the main epic models for the scene (the offering of a *peplos* to Athena by the Trojan women at *Il.* 6.286-311 and *Aen.* 1.479-82, as well as the offering of gifts to Minerva by the Italian women at *Aen.* 11.477-85) portray the Argive women as actively involved in casting Juno in the role of Pallas / Minerva⁸⁶. Minerva, unlike Juno, refuses to offer aid in the Homeric and Virgilian models, while in the case of her punishment of Arachne, Ovid had showed her bitter and revengeful side against a woman who had similarly portrayed on a tapestry scenes of

84 — On the weaving of Arachne and Philomela see especially Oliensis 2004 and Newlands 2018: 152-64. See Dietrich 1999: 47-9 for Statius’ reception of Ovid’s feminine weaving in the *Thebaid*.

85 — As Cannizzaro (2020, forthcoming) notes, there may be a significant intertext in Sulpicia’s birthday poem to Juno Natalis, where Juno is similarly referred to as “chaste” and asked to come to her in her purple cloak: Tib. 3.12 = 4.6.13-14 *adnue purpureaque ueni perlucida palla: / ter tibi fit libo, ter, dea casta, mero*. Here Juno seems to be asked to turn a hidden relationship into a stable marital bond (4.6.8 *sed iuueni quaeuo mutua uincla para*).

86 — See Kytzler 1968, who also discusses the similarities between this scene and the episode of Roman women offering a robe to Juno and other gifts to Pallas, Apollo, Mars and Dione after the battle of Trasimene in Silius *Pun.* 7.74-89 (note that the women at 7.78 refer to themselves as *gens casta*). Kytzler 1968: 56 n. 20 notes that *peplum* is a *hapax* both in the *Aeneid* and in the *Thebaid*.

rapes perpetuated by Jupiter. In contrast to the models, Juno here will be favourable to the women, and the enmity that characterized Virgil's Pallas will be displaced onto Jupiter instead (cf. *Aen.* 1.482 *diua... auersa* and *Theb.* 10.71 *auersumque Iouem*)⁸⁷. According to Francesco Cannizzaro, the description of Juno receiving Minerva's garment and epithet may elicit a metapoetic reading of Statius' receipt of the "textual heritage of the epic tradition" – a tradition that Statius conquers since, in contrast with Minerva's traditional adversity, his Juno will grant her divine assent to the prayers⁸⁸. At the same time, however, we can again interpret the character of Minerva, as in Bacchus' speech, as a reference to an impenetrable, unproductive model of femininity – one that is able to shield itself from male violence, albeit only by adopting male connotations in return. What we may glimpse in the contrasting comparison between these two *castae diuae* is Statius' reworking of a diametric opposition between the two as already encapsulated in Ovid's *Fasti*, where Juno was offended by the fact that Minerva's delivery did not involve women (*Fast.* 5.231-2), and asked the goddess Flora the possibility of a parthenogenesis that by definition shall not involve men (*Fast.* 5.239-42 *si pater est factus neglecto coniugis usu / Iuppiter et solus nomen utrumque tenet, / cur ego desperem fieri sine coniuge mater / et parere intacto, dummodo casta, uiro?*), "If Jupiter has become a father without the use of a wife, and unites both titles in his single person, why should I despair of becoming a mother without a husband, and of bringing forth without contact with a man, always supposing that I am chaste?". Juno's parthenogenesis in the *Fasti* will result in the birth of Mars (*Fast.* 5.258), and "war" is indeed what the Argive women will also receive from Juno in Book 10⁸⁹. But what they will get in addition, on the poetological level, is a closure of the epic as a women-only business in Book 12, where Juno is allowed to act as the patron goddess of the women in all their experiences of femininity. In this respect, her "chastity" has a diametrically different effect from that of Minerva. Her downcast gaze in the ecphrasis (10.63 *lumine demisso*) evokes simultaneously the traditional modesty of Roman matrons⁹⁰ and the seductive arts of Homer's Aphrodite (*Hymn.* 5.156 κατ' ὄμματα καλὰ βαλοῦσα, "casting her lovely eyes down"), evoking, but at the same time differentiating from, Pallas'

87 — See Kytzler 1968: 56 n. 20.

88 — Cannizzaro (2020, forthcoming).

89 — See n. 57, and note that in Hom. *Hymn* 3.305-54 she gives birth to Typhaon instead. A different version preserved in a Hesiodic fragment (fr. 343 Merkelbach-West) features both Hera's parthenogenesis of Hephaestus and Zeus' birth of Athena as a result of conjugal strife: see Pirenne-Delforge and Pironti 2016: 64-6. On Hera's motherhood of Ares in Homer, and the similarities between the two, see Pirenne-Delforge and Pironti 2016: 57-9.

90 — Delarue 2000: 349 notes a parallel with the downcast gaze that she will invite the Argive women to keep at 12.469 *obtentā summittere lumina palla*. Kytzler 1968: 58 hears an echo of Lavinia (*Aen.* 11.480 *oculos deiecta decoros*).

“fixed gaze” (*Aen.* 1.482 *diua solo fixos oculos auersa tenebat*, “with averted gaze the goddess kept her eyes fixed on the ground”) and the fixity of her proto-phallic spear⁹¹.

The Argive women’s offer of a vision of a Juno that predates her union with Jupiter is immediately followed by Juno’s action in the narrative, when she summons Sleep to set up a massacre of Thebans. On a rather disquieting level, the ecphrasis that advertises the union between Jupiter and Juno as an incestuous brother-sister marriage encourages the goddess to take an active role in this incestuous civil war⁹². From this point onwards, Juno as Jupiter’s sister will be referred to twice as *Saturnia* (10.162, 12.311), an epithet that underlines her power independently of, and on a par with, Jupiter⁹³. The massacre of Thebans that ensues, as Lovatt notices, makes no difference to the narrative, but allows her to channel her anger at Jupiter (10.75 *horruit irarum stimulis*, “she shivered with the stings of anger”; an anger deeper than the one she felt against him for his affair with Alcmena, 10.76-8)⁹⁴, while she substitutes the downcast gaze on the ecphrasis with a “vertical gaze downwards” that highlights her newly found “position of power” (10.73 *uidet alto ex aethere*, “she sees from high heaven”), perhaps an attempt to usurp the very role of her husband in the first book of the *Aeneid* (*Aen.* 1.223-4 *cum Iuppiter aethere summo / despiciens*, “when Jupiter, looking down from the top of the heavens...”) ⁹⁵. In Iris’ words to Sleep, *Iuno*... *iubet*; cf. *iubes* at 1.251 and 7.180), and her intention to slaughter the Thebans, which happens to be in line with Jupiter’s plans (*Theb.* 10.130-1 *rara est hoc posse facultas / placatumque Iouem dextra Iunone mereri*, “rarely comes such an opportunity, to win Jupiter’s favour with Juno propitious”) ⁹⁶, sets in action a kind of perverted variation of her “reconciliations” with her husband at the end

91 — On Pallas as a gender-bending deity in the *Achilleid*, and on her spear as symbol of her masculinity see Heslin 2005: 237-42. On Hera’s seductive arts as already parallel to those of Aphrodite in the *Iliad* (*Il.* 14.153-360) see Pirenne-Delforge and Pironti 2016: 42-6.

92 — I owe this observation to an anonymous referee.

93 — See Delarue 2000: 348.

94 — The fact that her anger in this scene is deeper than the anger she felt at Alcmena highlights a more profound nature of the causes of Juno’s anger and pain in the *Thebaid*; it does not mean, *pace* Dominik 1994: 49, that the reason for the massacre lies in Juno’s “petty jealousy”. Also note, with Kytzler 1968: 54, a structural parallel between *Theb.* 10.61-4 and *Theb.* 10.75-8.

95 — Lovatt 2013: 61.

96 — These lines have elicited difficulties since, if anything, they should indicate the opposite (see Williams 1972: 50; Shackleton Bailey 2003.ii: 136). A few late manuscripts have an added a line after 130: *Iunonemque tibi placatam coniuge dextro* or *placatamque simul Iunone coniuge dextro*. Some editors accept the imperative *merere* of later manuscripts and bracket *rara est hoc posse facultas*; note also that P has *uereri*. The repetition of *dextra*, in a different sense, at *Theb.* 10.132 may be cause for suspicion, although Williams considers it a careless repetition. The reference is to the parallel scene of Juno exhorting Sleep (that time against Jupiter) at Hom. *Il.* 14.242-76.

of the *Aeneid* that will culminate in this book of the epic with their joint killing of Capaneus (*Theb.* 10.912-4)⁹⁷.

Juno's pain: a generative wound

The Juno of *Thebaid* 10 remains a speechless deity, but she is a goddess of guidance in the darkness as well as of prophetic and poetic inspiration. She takes up an inverted version of the brightening role of "Juno Lucina", patron deity of labour, as she brandishes the lunar torch to bring light to bodies that Thiodamas shall accompany in death rather than birth (10.282-4 *armataque Iuno / lunarem quatiens exserta lampada dextra / pandit iter firmatque animos et corpora monstrat*, "armed Juno, tossing a lunar torch with her right hand stretched out, opens the path, strengthens their spirits and shows them the bodies")⁹⁸, but she also seems to assume the prophetic role of Apollo when the narrator speculates that she may be the one inspiring Thiodamas to reveal the Fates (10.162 *siue hanc Saturnia mentem / siue... bonus instigabat Apollo*, "whether Saturnia instigated such state or mind or... kind Apollo")⁹⁹. This prophetic role of Juno had already been glimpsed in her nocturnal communication with Argia in Books 2 and 3 (2.350-1; 3.691-2), and highlights a generally underexplored trend in the *Thebaid* that shows the goddess participate in the development of the plot in her speeches, even though she is herself a spectator on the sidelines for the greatest part of it. As Federica Bessone has noted, her brief appeal to Jupiter that breaks her long silence in Book 9 in an attempt to save Hippomedon happens to include the first reference in the poem to the Athenian intervention that will bring the war, and the *Thebaid*, to a close (9.517-9 *certe tumulos supremaque uictis / busta dabas: ubi Cecropiae post proelia flammae, / Theseos ignis ubi est?*, "You promised for certain tombs and final pyres to the conquered; where are the Cecropian flames after the battles? Where is Theseus' fire?")¹⁰⁰. *Pace* Shackleton Bailey, this is not "just a slip" on Statius' part¹⁰¹. Rather, it can be interpreted as a conscious reworking of a theme – the metapoetic power of Juno – that

97 — See above on Capaneus. On the incongruity of Juno's reconciliations in the *Aeneid* see the classic article by Feeney 1984.

98 — On the etymology of Juno Lucina from *lux* see Varro in n.30 and Ovid *Fast.* 2.449-50, who also refers to the parallel etymology from *lucus*.

99 — As Hardie 1993: 112 notes, this prophetic inspiration is typically modelled upon Apollo inspiring Virgil's Sibyl – what is unusual is Thiodamas' later report that the inspiration actually came from a human predecessor, Amphiaraus (10.189-91). It is probable that Statius's text reflects an association between the Cumaean Sibyl (originally introduced from Samos) and Hera / Juno, which is testified by material sources and present at different junctures in Virgil's *Aeneid*: see Johnston 1998, according to whom, in the *Aeneid*, "Juno, *qua* local, primitive, chthonic deity, is being displaced by the beautiful young, colonizing deity, Apollo" (p. 22).

100 — See Bessone 2011: 18; cf. Delarue 2000: 347-8.

101 — Shackleton Bailey 2003.ii: 97 n.36 "Juno too becomes prophetic – probably just a slip".

already played quite an important role in Virgil's *Aeneid*, where she was the one who effectively set the poem's narrative in motion¹⁰².

This aspect of Juno is already evident in Juno's first speech in Book 1, to which we shall now briefly return. We have seen Bacchus attempt to re-echo Jupiter's first words in the epic, when asking whether the punishments had a limit in the future (7.161 *quis modus?*). Juno similarly wonders about poetic limits, but she turns instead to the past when asking where to put a limit to the correction of the centuries (1.268-70 "*ū quo tempore tandem / terrarum furias abolere et saecula retro / emendare sat est?*"). In doing so, she aligns herself directly with the narrator, who similarly opened the epic by claiming that the "series of tales goes far back" (1.7 *longa retro series*), but that it is the poet's role to choose a limit, namely the troubled house of Oedipus (1.16-17 *limes mihi carminis esto / Oedipodae confusa domus*)¹⁰³. At the same time, Juno also anticipates the "long and well known series of evils" on the ecphrasis of the necklace of Harmonia that will be passed to Argia in Book 2 and act as a veritable poetic engine to the plot, as well as the symbol of a harmful poetic tradition that has been handed down from woman to woman (2.267 *longa est series, sed nota, malorum*)¹⁰⁴. Between the narrator and the necklace, it is Juno's first speech that takes up the role of providing insights into the narrative of this poem, when she confronts Jupiter with her list of guilty places to punish – a list that includes, in a nutshell, key moments of the whole *Thebaid*, providing both Jupiter and Statius with material to work with in drawing the borders of this poem and of this war.

From *Theb.* 1.259 onwards, Juno appears to enunciate a poetic catalogue of places that, with the exception of Samos and Crete, will all get their share of war in the *Thebaid*. First come Thebes and Argos, set one against the other in the two halves of the line (1.259 *facta luant Thebae: cur hostes eligis Argos?*). Sparta, Mycenae and Arcadia follow, all of which will become entangled in war in the course of the poem¹⁰⁵. As Juno enjoins Jupiter to start by punishing Arcadia, she seems to be inviting him to a poetic quest for the old models: by referring to Arcadia as the

102 — See for example Keith 2000: 112-3. Note that Pirenne-Delforge and Pironti 2016: 57 backdated Juno's role as "narrative engine" to the *Iliad*: "la colère d'Héra et ses disputes avec Zeus fonctionnent comme une formidable machine narrative qui permet à l'action d'avancer". On the metapoetic aspects of Virgil's Juno a monograph entitled *Juno's Aeneid: Narrative, Metapoetics, Dissent* is expected from Joseph Farrell.

103 — See Ahl 1986: 2839 and Briguglio 2017: 306.

104 — On the metapoetic and doomed aspects of the necklace see Henderson 1991: 34-5, Newlands 2016: 151-2 and especially McNelis 2007: 57-75.

105 — On Mycenae see nn. 46 and 47. Both Sparta and Arcadia feature in the omens of 7.412-9 (see below p. 196). In addition, see the catalogue of troops, with the Spartans at 4.227-33 and the Arcadians at 4.236-46, with an excursus on their ethnography and history at 4.275-308, with Parkes 2012 *ad loc.* and Lovatt 2005: 183-8.

place "past which the waters of Alpheus glide, retracing in all its distance his Sicanian love" (271-2 *fluctiuaga qua praeterlabitur unda / Sicanios longe relegens Alpheos amores*), she encourages him to trace back and "read again" (1.272 *relegens*) the versions of this myth, as in Ovid's *Metamorphoses* (*Met.* 5.487-641) or Virgil's tenth *Eclogue*, whose *subterlabere* (*Ecl.* 10.4) is varied by Juno's *praeterlabitur* (*Theb.* 1.271). *Eclogue* 10's invitation to start singing of Gallus' loves (*Ecl.* 10.6 *incipere*) may be echoed directly by Juno's imperative to Jupiter to start reviewing places to punish (1.271 *incipere*) in what sounds via intertextuality as an epic invitation to the Muse to start singing, from whatever beginning (Hom. *Od.* 1.10 ἀμύθεν)¹⁰⁶. But Juno's invitation to review the literary past soon proves to be even more specific than this, since she soon identifies the first place to punish as Mount Lykaion, where the Arcadians set a shrine in Jupiter's honour (1.273-4): this is an invitation for Jupiter to remember his previous self at another council of the gods in Ovid's *Metamorphoses* 1, and his choice of starting the punishments from impious Lycaon¹⁰⁷.

The metapoetic dimension of Juno's speech becomes almost prophetic, since a number of images evoked in these lines will not fail to turn into textual reality in the course of the poem. The idea that Io and Egypt will replace her cult (1.264-5) seems to foreshadow the time when Bacchus' drought will indeed turn the Argive land into a second Egypt, as suggested by the simile of the Nile at *Theb.* 4.705-10.108 The mention of Oenomaus (1.274-6) and the connection, established by Juno, between his horses and the man-eating horses of Thracian Diomedes, anticipate not one but two further episodes in the poem. Firstly, the portents of Book 7 (7.412-9), where Oenomaus is literally seen as racing again in Pisa (7.415-6 *saeuo decurrere campo / Oenomaum sua Pisa refert*), while bad omens also occur in relation to three more places mentioned by Juno in her speech: Sparta sees her own version of the Theban civil war in the form of a brotherly conflict between Castor and Pollux (7.412-3 *Sparte... uidit Amyclaeos (facinus!) concurrere fratres*); the Arcadians hear Lycaon bark again in the silence of the night (7.414-5 *Arcades insanas latrare Lycaonis umbras / nocte ferunt tacita*); and the people of Mycenae pray to a sorrowful statue of Perseus as well as Juno's "troubled ivory" (7.418-9 *Perseos effigiem maestam exorantque Mycenae / confusum Iunonis ebur*) – with this final image of a disconcerted statue of previously prophetic Juno appropriately closing the list of presages. Secondly, the connection

106 — On Alpheus in Statius see Parkes 2012: *ad* 4.239-40 with further sources.

107 — See Briguglio 2017: 308 on Statius' mixed allusion to a different version of the story (narrated by Paus. 8.2.3 and also alluded to at *Theb.* 11.128), according to which Lycaon polluted Jupiter's shrine by killing a youth on his altar.

108 — On the similarities between Egypt and the dried-up Argolid see Parkes 2012: *ad* 4.705-10.

between the horses of Oenomaus and those of Diomedes also evidently looks forward to the chariot-race of *Thebaid* 6, where Chromis, son of Hercules, has the Thracian horses of Diomedes portentously recover “their famous hunger” and try to get a taste of Oenomaus’ son, Hippodamus (6.486-7 *sed Thraces equi ut uidere iacentem / Hippodamum, redit illa fumes...*)¹⁰⁹. We can compare the forgotten, and then reacquired, hunger of Diomedes’ horses with the forgotten thirst for blood of Bacchus’ tigers (7.569 *sanguinis oblitus*), only reacquired through Tisiphone’s intervention (7.579-83), both being symbols that convey the well-known belatedness of Statius’ epic¹¹⁰. In this speech, Juno assumes the role of an epigonal Muse in surveying a forgotten mythical past and turning it again into concrete reality: she portrays the ancient threat of man-eating beasts – in itself an anticipation of the cannibalism both of Mycenae (Thyestes) and of Argos (Tydeus) – as present here and now, set into action not by the old guilt of Tantalus or Lycaon, but by the unnamed man who, seeking the future in the past, namely returning into his own origin to give birth to progeny (1.235 *proprios... reuolutus in ortus*), literally turned back the clock of time¹¹¹.

Juno’s speech in *Thebaid* 1, in all its prophecy and metapoetics, stems – we should not forget – from a sudden pain. This is far from “unexpected” if we think that Juno continues to embody her Virgilian predecessor, whose “eternal wound” (*Aen.* 1.36) opened and propelled the plot of the *Aeneid*. But even more than in Virgil, we have seen that the pain of Statius’ Juno specifically reflects the unequal condition of her marriage and is predicated upon a marital “discord” that, as the Argive women seem to show, dates back to ancient deceptions and traumas. What both the Argive women and Juno try to express, in the ecphrasis of the robe and in Juno’s speech, is a wish to “abolish” and “emend” (1.269-70 *abolere... emendare*) “the whole old age of eternity”. Jupiter may want to do this by punishing and correcting the sins of the past in the present, but Juno’s wording seems to imply instead a desire for textual revisionism, for correcting the past in each retelling of it: this is the very revisionism that allows her innovative character to appear in this epic. At the same time, it implies a wish to turn back the clock of mythical and literary time: Juno’s prophetic action of setting the civil war, and the poem, in motion, allows the horses of Diomedes to restore “their famous hunger” just as the women’s weaving attempts to restore Juno’s virginity and take her back to a time that predated her union with Jupiter. What is certainly novel

109 — On which see Lovatt 2005: 185-6.

110 — On Bacchus’ tigers in this sense see Schiesaro 2019: 211-12.

111 — On the parallel between this phrasing of Oedipus’ incest and the poem’s “narrative recursion” see Henderson 1991: 68, n. 71.

and unexpected in this epic is the *telos* to which these efforts will lead the women of the *Thebaid*. This is the Jove-free world of *Thebaid* 12, where Juno is the real goddess of closure and reconciliation, and Jupiter only features in the form of the sleeping companion from whose bosom his wife manages to snatch herself in order to finally bend "inflexible" Pallas:

Forte soporiferas caeli secreta per umbras
 Iuno, sinu magni semet furata mariti,
 Theseos ad muros, ut Pallada flecteret, ibat,
 supplicibusque piis faciles aperiret Athenas.
 (*Theb.* 12.291-4)

As it chanced, Juno had stolen herself from the bosom of her great husband and was making her secret way through the sleep-laden darkness of heaven to the walls of Theseus, there to sway Pallas and make Athens ready to receive the pious suppliants.

If Juno's gaze downwards in *Thebaid* 10, as we saw, doubled the gaze of Jupiter in the first book of the *Aeneid*, here the goddess continues to fill Jupiter's shoes, in a striking reversal of her own usurpation in *Thebaid* 1, by imitating Jupiter's swaying of the Carthaginians' hearts in order to ensure Aeneas' welcoming reception (*Aen.* 1.302-4). In a book that problematises its sense of closure by opening with the word *nondum*, "not yet" (*Theb.* 12.1)¹¹², after the Argive women have attempted to bring Juno back to a time when she was "not yet" offended by Jupiter's "stolen affairs" (10.64 *nondum furtis offensa mariti*), the goddess is allowed to act independently and activate a kind of retaliation for Jupiter's *furta* by "stealing herself" (12.292 *furata*) from that "mighty husband" and wedding that in her speech in *Thebaid* 1 she had intimated to be too big for her (1.257-8 *magni... tori*). The theft of her own self (12.292 *semet*) to herself, finally allows her to act in Book 12 as the goddess of reconciliation of the *Thebaid's* "feminine ending", an ending which openly foregrounds female grief in terms of a shared experience of sorrow and lament¹¹³. Here, Juno enters the scene at the climactic end of a list of female deities (12.129-33: Hecate, Ino, Ceres) as the *dux femina facti* (*Aen.* 1.364) of the Argive women's "glorious enterprise" of mourning the bodies (12.134-6 *ipsa per auersos ducit Saturnia calles / occultatque uias, ne plebs congressa suorum / ire uetet pereatque ingentis gloria coepti*, "Saturnia herself leads them through bypaths and hides their route, lest the crowd of their own folk forbid their journey and the glory of their great enterprise be lost"), and she will

112 — See Dietrich 1999: 42.

113 — On the "feminine" nature of Book 12 see Henderson 1993: 185-8, Dietrich 1999, Augoustakis 2010: 75-91, Bessone 2011: 200-23, Keith 2013: 291-5; see also Manioti 2016 on the "sisterhood" between Argia and Antigone.

continue to lead the “Phoronean mothers” (12.465 *Phoroneas... matres*) to a now propitious Minerva (12.464 *dextra iam Pallade*), herself in tears (12.466 *non ipsa minus*), and even more explicitly characterized as a deity of reconciliation (12.466-7 *coetumque gementem / conciliat populis*, “she procures the favour of the people for the bewailing company”; 474-5 *dea conciliis se miscet utrisque / cuncta docens...*, “the goddess mingles with both assemblies, explaining everything...”).

In the course of leading an embassy of mourning women that marks the end of civil war, Juno keeps silent and tearful, like a divine Volumnia¹¹⁴. However, grief is again what impels her last words in the poem, since it is her “pain” at the sight of Argia (12.297 *indoluit uisu*) looking for the body of Polynices that pushes her to ask the help of Cynthia Luna:

“da mihi poscenti munus breue, Cynthia, si quis
est Iunonis honos; certe Iouis improba iussu 300
ter noctem Herculeam – ueteres sed mitto querelas:
en locus officio. cultrix placitissima nostri,
Inachis Argia cernis qua nocte uagetur
nec reperire uirum densis queat aegra tenebris?
et tibi nimbosum languet iubar: exere, quaeso, 305
cornua, et assueto propior premat orbita terras.
hunc quoque, qui curru madidas tibi pronus habenas
ducit, in Aonios uigiles demitte Soporem”.
(*Theb.* 12.299-308)

“Grant me a small favour, Cynthia, if Juno is held in any regard; it’s true that, at Jove’s command, three times Hercules’ night you shamelessly... but I leave old grudges aside: here’s an opportunity to be of service. You see in what a night Inachian Argia, my favourite worshipper, is wandering full of sorrow, unable to find her husband in such thick darkness? And your ray languishes in the clouds: bring out your horns, I beg you, and let your orbit press the earth closer than usual. And send this one too, who leans forward in your chariot as he manages the dewy reins, to the Aonian sentinels: send them Sleep”.

This scene emphasizes the indeterminate and shifting identities of the gods in epic, with Sopor as a clear double for Somnus in Book 10¹¹⁵, while Cynthia Luna (likely Diana / Artemis, after her birthplace on Mount Cynthus) appears in many ways as a doublet of Juno’s previous “Lucina” self in Book 10, and it is remarkable that the couple of Cynthia Luna and Juno Lucina as goddesses of labour appears again in the *Siluae*

114 — On Volumnia, the wife of Coriolanus, see Livy 2.39-40.

115 — Various identified as Sopor at *Theb.* 10.156, 281, 321.

in the epithalamium for another widow like Argia, Violentilla¹¹⁶. The situation, however, has changed significantly since Book 10, and especially since Juno's first words in Book 1. Cynthia's assent to her prayers shows Juno as having recovered that "honour" (12.299-300 *si quis / est Iunonis honos*) whose loss she paradigmatically lamented in both *Aeneid* 1 and *Thebaid* 1 (*Aen.* 1.48-9 *et quisquam numen Iunonis adorat / praeterea, aut supplex aris imponet honorem?*), "and does anyone adore the divinity of Juno anymore, or honour her altars in supplication?", cf. *Theb.* 1.262-4). If Jupiter's affair with Alcmena was still a reason for anger two books earlier (10.76-8), she now interrupts her complaint, together with the memory of her previous grievances to Jupiter (cf. 12.300 *improba* and 1.254 *improbis*), with a telling aposiopesis. As Briguglio has noticed, the breaking off of Juno's speech at 12.301 signals a decisive "shift from the epic (mostly Virgilian) tradition", and even from her previous angered self in the prologue of Seneca's *Hercules Furens* – a self that she nevertheless seems to allude to when announcing that she is leaving old grudges aside (cf. 12.301 *ueteres sed mitto querelas* and *Herc. Fur.* 19 *sed uetera sero querimur*)¹¹⁷. Indeed, the Juno who brings light back to the darkened world of the *Thebaid* seems to be drawn in a diametrically opposite way to the "Juno Inferna" of Seneca's tragedy¹¹⁸. This final speech of Juno in the poem seals the innovative character of the goddess that we have witnessed in various ways at more than one juncture in the *Thebaid*: as in Books 1 and 9, Juno only speaks out of pain and pity; as in Books 10 and 12, she doubles up with the Moon in offering protection and leadership in both the concrete darkness of the night and in the metaphoric darkness that arose in the absence of Jupiter and divine providence. And what results from such absence in *Thebaid* 12 is a world in which both mortal and divine females can easily substitute for male roles, with both Juno and Cynthia filling in for Jupiter: indeed, the power of Cynthia's light is stressed by the detail that even the wife of the man who has sex with women in the form of a thunderbolt can now scarcely manage "to sustain" the brightness of the moon's flames – that is, without Jupiter, she herself is allowed to embody Semele and live her experience (12.310-11 *expauere umbrae, fulgorque recisus / sideribus; uix ipsa tulit Saturnia flammam*, "the shadows took fright, and the stars lost their brightness; Saturnia herself scarcely bore the flames"; cf. *Ov. Met.* 3.308-9 *corpus mortale tumultus / non tulit aethereos*, "her mortal body did not endure the aethereal shock").

116 — *Silu.* 1.2.268-9 *acceleret partu decimum bona Cynthia mensem, sed parcat Lucina*, "may kind Cynthia hasten the tenth month for the birth, but may Lucina be favourable".

117 — See Briguglio 2021, forthcoming. On the relationship between the *Thebaid* and Seneca's *Hercules Furens* see Criado 2000: 26-9.

118 — See Fitch 2018: 117.

Conclusion

Juno's silence in the *Thebaid* is a telling silence, just as the ineffective nature of her first speech is a meaningful ineffectiveness. Both can be made to speak of gender inequalities, male violence and marital discord in and outside the poem. Juno's speechlessness and textual absence for a great portion of the *Thebaid* must be interpreted as an integral part of her characterization in Statius, and as telling of the troubled status not only of her Olympian marriage, but of marriage generally in the poem. Indeed, the absence of the patron goddess of marriage should not surprise us in a poem that, as Newlands in particular has argued, shows marriage itself as the primary source of doom and discord, bringing to the fore the social implications of civil war¹¹⁹. But in a war stirred up and brought to extreme consequences by male lust and incestuous desire¹²⁰, it is the women who are eventually allowed to offer some sort of closure and reconciliation: they are the ones who will end up bringing about the "glory of a mighty enterprise" (*Theb.* 12.136 *ingentis gloria coepti*) – which is a metapoetic hint, to echo Bessone, at this "glorious and unprecedented female-driven epic"¹²¹.

Both the heroic role assumed by the epic's women and the leadership of Juno could be interpreted in the light of what has often been remarked upon as a greater authority and power enjoyed by Roman women at the time of the Flavians¹²². According to Newlands, Flavian women's greater influence and economic independence, as put on display in the ecphrasis of Violentilla's house in *Silu.* 1.2, also comes with a new perception of feminine values: "economic wealth and power enter alongside the conventional female virtues of beauty and modesty; virginity, a sign of a woman's vulnerability, becomes transmuted to chastity, a sign of independence and self-control"¹²³. Newlands' words tally with the portrait of Juno as *casta diua* in the *Thebaid* and allow us to read her story within the poem as that of a woman gradually taking possession of her independence from her husband and brother. But the ecphrasis on the *peplum*, and its counter-piece in the simile of the *Achilleid*, also allow us to glimpse the unspoken story of a rape, of the pain and discord that "virgin" (*casta*) Juno had to endure in marriage in order to be then represented as "chaste" (*casta*) Juno. In the *Thebaid*, we are reminded that this evolution from "virginity" to

119 — Newlands 2016.

120 — On Statius' erotic and elegiac characterization of Polynices' incestuous lust for Thebes see Briguglio 2017: 54-7.

121 — Bessone 2011: 205 "una gloriosa e inedita epica al femminile".

122 — See Newlands 2016: 158 with reference to Treggiari 1991: 365-96 on women's right to own property.

123 — Newlands 2002: 101.

"chastity" is nothing but a false evolution in terms of how female values remain contingent on patriarchal constructions.

This new, and indeed "unexpected" portrayal of *casta* Juno may find a parallel in her imperial equivalent, namely Domitia Longina, whose portraiture as Juno in the visual sources is well documented, and the *discordia* of whose imperial thalamus was in the public domain, to the point that she was actually exiled in 82 or 83, albeit to be recalled one year later¹²⁴. If we read Jupiter against the grain of Domitian's failure to have a surviving son from either Domitia (whose offspring died) or his lover Julia Titia (wedded to Titus and forced to abortion), we may speculatively wonder whether history may not have offered concrete parallels for the portrayal of a tyrant whose brusque response to his wife's speech contrasts his affectionate reaction to the words of the almost aborted son of his lover. Similarly, Juno's insistence that the problem with Jupiter's relationship with Semele was that, unlike his affairs at Argos, this one was public (1.257 *uultu confessus adis*) may resonate with Suetonius' insistence on the fact that Domitian's love for Julia was also openly advertised (Suet. *Dom.* 22 *ardentissime palamque dilexit*, "he loved her ardently and openly"), a detail that matches the uncanny similarity between the fate of Semele and the anecdote that Julia died as a result of the abortion that Domitian forced upon her (*Dom.* 22 *...ut etiam causa mortis extiterit coactae conceptum a se abigere*, "...and even became the cause of her death by compelling her to get rid of a child of his by abortion")¹²⁵.

Domitia Longina appears once as Juno in Statius' puzzling poem to the court eunuch Earinus, *Siluae* 3.4, which was singled out by Frederick Ahl as an outstanding example of Statius' "art of safe criticism"¹²⁶. Here, the universes of the mythical and Roman Junos are presented as parallel but separate: at *Silu.* 3.4.12-20, a comparison between Earinus and Ganymede is introduced, raising questions about the kind of relationship that ties Earinus to Domitian. The comparison is introduced by reference to the Phrygian Mount Ida (3.4.12), the mountain of both Ganymede and Paris, that commentators on the *Thebaid* have found to be alluded to, alongside Mount Ida in Crete ("guilty", perhaps, of faking Zeus' death), when Juno blames *Ida nocens* at *Theb.* 1.278¹²⁷. In the context of a general similarity

124 — See Suet. *Dom.* 3.1, 10.4, 13.1. On Domitia's portraits as Juno see Varner 1995: 201-2. Cf. also Juno wearing the *diadema* of Domitia at *Theb.* 10.75-6 *motaque uerendum / turbauit diadema coma*. On how Statius plays with the *Thebaid's* "undisguisably explosive potential to mean, within the Flavian cosmos" see Henderson 1993: 164-5.

125 — On the anecdotal nature of this episode (also recounted by Juv. 2.29-33 and Pliny *Ep.* 4.11.6) see Vinson 1989: 433-8.

126 — Ahl 1984: 205-8.

127 — See Beraldis 1824 *ad loc.*; contra Heuvel 1932 *ad loc.* Briguglio 2017: 310-11 tentatively accepts the sole reference to Crete.

in the triangulationships between the royal couples and the young lovers, Statius identifies the main difference in the reaction of the two Junos: for if the mythical Juno has always looked askance at Ganymede (*Silu.* 3.4.14-15 *illum quem turbida semper / Iuno uidet*), the Roman Juno joins her Ausonian Jupiter in looking at Earinus with approbation instead (*Silu.* 3.4.18-19 *Iuppiter Ausonius pariter Romanaque Iuno / aspiciunt et uterque probant*). Both Juno and Domitia here, in their contrasting characters, are nevertheless similarly drawn in so far as they follow traditional and institutional portraits. Not so the Juno of the *Thebaid*. The possible geographical split between Crete and Asia Minor in the reference to *Ida nocens* may in fact highlight one of the many ways in which we have seen Juno in the *Thebaid* attempt to escape from the constraints that the epic tradition has imposed on her: the traditional Juno grieves for the Phrygian Ida of both Paris and Ganymede, but the Mount Ida that *this* Juno hates instead is the mountain in Crete, the one which saved and protected that brother to whom she wishes she had never been married¹²⁸. The *Romana Iuno* of the institutional *Siluae* may well be forced by Statius's poetry to approve of the actions of her *Iuppiter Ausonius*, just as her mythical counterpart has to keep displaying her traditional anger against Jupiter's lovers. But the Juno of the *Thebaid* can finally, and unexpectedly, be released from her institutional and traditional duties.

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128 — Note that in Hyginus *Fab.* 139 it is Juno herself who takes baby Jupiter to Crete; see Pirenne-Delforge and Pironti 2016: 34, 137.

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